

LOUIS XVI AND  
MARIE ANTOINETTE

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*The Sunday Times.*





*Photo : Giraudon*

LOUIS XVI

*From the Portrait by an Unknown Artist.*

It bears the inscription "Donné par le Roi à M. Le C. de Moussy Lacontour  
le 30 May 1787"

# LOUIS XVI AND MARIE ANTOINETTE

During the Revolution

BY

NESTA H. WEBSTER

(MRS. ARTHUR WEBSTER)

AUTHOR OF 'THE CHEVALIER DE BOUFFLERS'

'THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: A STUDY IN DEMOCRACY'

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## PREFACE

IN order to make this book complete in itself it is necessary to repeat the explanation given in the Preface to its precursor, *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, that it does not set out to examine all the causes of the Revolution or to relate its entire history, but to view it from the standpoint of the King and Queen of France, that it is in fact the Revolution seen through the Palace windows just as my *French Revolution: a study in democracy* was the Revolution seen from the streets. Only where the royal family and the people come in contact has it been impossible to avoid a repetition of the same incidents, though in a varied and briefer form of narrative; for a more detailed account of those popular days of tumult readers are referred back to my earlier work.

It will doubtless be said in certain quarters that too much has already been written on the French Revolution, though since the admirable *Essays on the French Revolution* by John Wilson Croker, published more than a hundred years ago, very little has been written in the English language revealing the truth about that great upheaval or showing any evidence of original research amongst the documents of the period. We shall notice, moreover, that the above objection is seldom raised in the case of books glorifying the Revolution, however inaccurate; only when an attempt is made to show the revers de la médaille and do justice to the King, the cry goes up: Hold! enough! The axiom laid down by Collot d'Herbois in 1793 evidently still holds good—

'tout est permis pour quiconque agit dans le sens de la Révolution.'

The present work is in reality the first biography of Louis XVI in English, nor is an adequate one to be found in French. Where the Queen is concerned it is not a case of 'yet another book on Marie Antoinette' but of an answer to all the rest, the only counterblast, so far as I know, that has yet been offered to the flood of calumny recently poured out against her on the strength of newly discovered documents.<sup>1</sup> In the course of this volume the real evidence these documents provide will be carefully examined for the first time; the popular books built on them, such as those of Pierre Nezeloff and Stefan Zweig, cannot enter into the discussion. Since, however, they appear to have been taken by the less well informed public as presenting true portraits of the Queen, I have contributed an article dealing with them to *The Nineteenth Century and After* for March 1937.

With regard to the incredulity expressed by certain reviewers as to the influence attributed to Grand Orient Freemasonry and Illuminism in the first part of this work, I would point out that this is no strange theory of my own but one which has become so widely recognized in France as to be almost a platitude. The Freemasons of that country, whilst minimizing the importance of the part played by their Order in the engineering of the Revolution when writing for the general public, have always boasted of it in the Lodges, which still to-day remain forcing-grounds for revolutionary ideas. It would be interesting to know whether the British critics who dismiss this view as fantastic have ever examined the question for themselves, and if so, to hear their reasons for forming a contrary opinion. If, however, they

<sup>1</sup> See article on these in the front page of the *Times Literary Supplement* for February 7, 1935

have never given it any serious attention I would suggest that they might consider the evidence I brought forward in my book on *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, the chapter devoted to the subject by the Socialist Louis Blanc in his *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, the works of M. Copin-Albancelli and many other modern French writers, not forgetting those of Augustin Cochin, whose brilliant studies of the French Revolution, refuting Aulard, were unfortunately cut short by his early death.<sup>1</sup> They would also do well to realize that warnings against the Grand Orient have been constantly issued to the Lodges of this country by leading British Freemasons, notably by the late Lord Amphil, Pro Grand Master, and by the late Colonel Cecil Powney. A most interesting article by the latter, entitled 'Continental Freemasonry,' showing the revolutionary character of the Lodges in France, Spain, Portugal and elsewhere, appeared in the *Transactions of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research* in 1934 and has certainly been justified by recent events.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN the first part of this work, *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, p. 15, when referring to the legend that Marie Antoinette, hearing that the people had no bread, said: 'Then let them eat cake!' I gave as the probable origin of the story the remark attributed by the Comtesse de Boigne to Madame Victoire: 'Mais, mon Dieu, s'il pouvait se résigner à manger de la croûte de paté!' I have, however, since found an earlier origin in the *Relation d'un Voyage à Bruxelles et à Coblenz en 1791* by the Comte de

<sup>1</sup> Capitaine Augustin Cochin was killed in the battle of the Somme on July 8, 1916.



Provence, published in 1823, where the author says on p. 59: 'Aussi en mangeant la croûte avec le pâté, nous songeames à la reine Marie Thérèse qui répondit un jour que l'on plaignait devant elle les pauvres gens qui n'ont pas de pain: "Mais, mon Dieu, que ne mangent-ils de la croûte de pâté?"' It was thus the wife of Louis XIV who was supposed by the royal family to have uttered the famous remark erroneously attributed by the Comtesse de Boigne, writing in her old age, to Madame Victoire. The testimony of the Comte de Provence effectually disposes of the fable that it was ever made by Marie Antoinette.

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In order to shorten footnotes and indicate editions used, the following abbreviations have been adopted:

### CONTEMPORARY

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*Mémoires Secrets de 1770 à 1830 par le Comte d'Allonville.* 6 vols. (1838-1841.)

#### DUCHESSÉ D'ANGOULÊME.

Duchesse d'Angoulême. Madame Royale.

*Relation de la Captivité de la Famille Royale à la Tour du Temple.* (1802.)

#### ARMOIRE DE FER.

*Troisième Recueil, Pièces imprimées d'après le décret de la Convention Nationale du 5 décembre, 1792. . . . Déposées à la Commission Extraordinaire des Douze, établie pour le dépouillement des papiers trouvés dans l'armoire de fer au Château des Tuileries, etc.* Paris. De l'Imprimerie Nationale. (1793.)

#### BAILLY.

*Mémoires de Bailly.* 3 vols. (1821.)

#### BEAUCOURT. *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI.*

Marquis de Beaucourt. *Captivité et Derniers Moments de Louis XVI, récits originaux et documents officiels.* 2 vols. (1892.)

#### BEAULIEU.

C. F. Beaulieu, *Essais Historiques sur les Causes et les Effets de la Révolution Française.* 6 vols. (1801.)

#### BERTRAND DE MOLLEVILLE.

A. F. de Bertrand Moleville, *Mémoires particuliers pour servir à l'Histoire de la fin du règne de Louis XVI.* 2 vols. (1823.)

[This Minister of Louis XVI is usually known as Bertrand de Molleville, hence the above difference in spelling.]

#### BESENVAL.

*Mémoires du Baron de Besenval.* 2 vols. (1827.)

BOUILLÉ. *Mémoires.*

Marquis de Bouillé, *Mémoires.* (1821.)

[The author of these *Mémoires* was the General of Louis XVI. The Marquis de Bouillé, whose *Souvenirs et Fragments* are occasionally referred to, was his eldest son.]

BUCHÉZ ET ROUX.

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Written in 1790. Edmund Burke, Selections. Nelson.

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Mme Campan, *Mémoires sur la Vie de Marie Antoinette.* 1886.

*Journal de Cléry.*

*Journal de ce qui s'est passé à la Tour du Temple pendant la Captivité de Louis XVI, Roi de France, par Cléry.* (1823.)

[Jean Baptiste Cant-Hanet Cléry, the author of this *Journal*, was first the valet de chambre of the Dauphin, then of the whole royal family at the Temple. P. L. Hanet Cléry, whose *Mémoires* are occasionally referred to, was his brother and the valet de chambre of Madame Royale.]

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[The author of these *Souvenirs* was a page of Marie Antoinette and wrote in 1804.]

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*Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du Général La Fayette* publiés par sa famille. 6 vols. (1837.)

*Mémoires de Mme de la Tour du Pin.*

Marquise de la Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une Femme de Cinquante Ans.* 2 vols. (1914.)

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*Histoire de la Révolution Française* par M. H. Lemaire. 3 vols. (1816).

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*Histoire des Jacobins en France ou Examen des Principes anarchiques et des organisateurs de la Révolution Française.* 2 vols. (1795.)

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*Mémoires de Malouet.* 2 vols. (1868.)

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*Le Nouveau Paris.* 6 vols. (1798.)

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*Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de La March* édité par Ad. de Bacourt. 2 vols. (1851.)

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Galart de Montjoie (Ventre de la Touloubre), *Histoire de Marie Antoinette Joséphe Jeanne, Archiduchesse d'Autriche, Reine de France.* 2 vols. (1797.)

This book is extremely rare; the Comte d'Hézécques, in his *Mémoires* (p. 19) written 130 years ago, says it had then become very rare and describes Montjoie as 'one of the most truthful authors of our time.' (*Ibid.*, p. 307.) The copy of the first edition used for this book is in my possession.

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*Mémoires de Mme de Tourzel, gouvernante des Enfants de France* publiés par le Duc des Cars. 2 vols. (1883.)

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*Journées Mémorables de la Révolution Française* par le Vicomte Walsh. 5 vols. (1882.) An earlier edition appeared in 1839.

[The author, Joseph Alexis, Vicomte Walsh (1782-1860), was of English origin, a descendant of a Jacobite who had followed James II into exile. Under the Restoration he became Postmaster at Nantes. He published several works on Brittany and La Vendée. (See *Souvenirs du Baron de Frénilly* (1908), p. 462.)]

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## CHAPTER I

### THE STATES GENERAL

THE fateful year of 1789 had dawned, the year when we have been led to believe that a France reduced to the lowest depth of misery and starvation, crushed beneath the yoke of servitude and without hope of alleviation by reforms, had reached the pitch of exasperation that made revolution not only the inevitable but the necessary corollary.

Yet what was the real state of France at the beginning of this year? Vastly different to that of France in 1774 described in the earlier part of this work.<sup>1</sup> The fifteen years during which Louis XVI had reigned were the most prosperous the country had ever known, and de Tocqueville declares that 'at no period following the Revolution did public prosperity develop more rapidly than during the twenty years preceding it.'<sup>2</sup>

I referred in my *French Revolution* to Carlyle's absurd method of detaching isolated passages from Arthur Young's *Travels in France*—passages often torn from their context in such a way as to alter their meaning completely—in order to conjure up a dark picture of widespread misery, and I contrasted with these the account given by Dr. Rigby of the fertile countryside, the splendid state of cultivation, the happy faces and dancing peasants he observed on a journey he made through France at the same date as Arthur Young. Since then the report of another British traveller has been published, John Campbell Sutherland, whose journal of *A Tour in France in 1788* appeared in the

<sup>1</sup> *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, chap. iii.

<sup>2</sup> D'Allonville, iii. 145; de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1887), p. 255.



*National Review* for September 1930 endorsing Rigby's description of the people 'looking gay and happy.'

This view finds confirmation in a most remarkable series of articles by M. Lenotre,<sup>1</sup> the last written by him and published after his death in 1935 which was so deeply regretted by all lovers of his brilliant writing and genius for historical research, in this country as in France. The series opens with the words:

'Amongst the multiple causes of the Revolution there is one which people have generally omitted to point out: France in the time of Louis XVI was too happy. She flattered herself with the illusion that only a small effort would be needed in order to propagate her happiness and transform all Europe into an earthly Paradise.'

The eminent historian goes on to draw a charming picture of France under the old régime, the gaiety of village life—'partout on danse'—the prosperity of industry and commerce, the attention given to works of charity, to the relief of the poor, the old, the blind, the parents of large families. And Mercier, the revolutionary journalist, is quoted as saying: 'Never did any century so multiply good works, never was good done with so much care and intelligence.'

It is true that the Eden Treaty of September 26, 1786, drawn up by Sir William Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, and Vergennes, the Foreign Minister of France, was said to have dealt a blow to French industry by reducing the tariffs on British goods, and it undoubtedly created considerable unemployment in certain manufacturing centres; nevertheless it increased the trade between England and France.<sup>2</sup> Arthur Young, during his travels in France in 1787, reported that, although it was violently condemned at Abbeville and Rouen, 'at Bourdeaux they think it a wise measure, that tends equally to the benefit of both countries.'<sup>3</sup> No modern

<sup>1</sup> *La Vie à Paris pendant la Révolution* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for Dec. 15, 1935, and following numbers, quoting Rigby's account and confirming it.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, p. 8 footnote quoting Knight's *History of England*, vi. 797.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

historian would certainly regard it as a serious factor in the Revolution; neither M. Lenotre nor M. Madelin mention it at all. M. Casimir Stryenski describes it as actually 'advantageous from the economic point of view.'<sup>1</sup>

The same picture of a prosperous France was drawn by Edmund Burke in 1791. The population had gone on increasing steadily, and from the 18 millions at the end of the seventeenth century had risen to 25 millions—a vast population compared with that of England, which in 1789 numbered only 10 millions. Burke, after commenting on this point, goes on to controvert the current theory of French misery in the light of his own personal observations:

'Indeed, when I consider the face of the kingdom of France; the multitude and opulence of her cities; the useful magnificence of her spacious high roads and bridges; the opportunity of her artificial canals and navigations opening the conveniences of maritime communication through a solid continent of so immense an extent; when I turn my eyes to the stupendous works of her ports and harbours, and to her whole naval apparatus, whether for war or trade; when I bring before my view the number of her fortifications . . . when I recollect how very small a part of that extensive region is without cultivation . . . when I reflect on the excellence of her manufactures and fabrics . . . when I contemplate *the grand foundations of charity, public and private*; when I survey the state of all the arts that beautify and polish life . . . I behold in all this something which awes and commands the imagination . . . and which demands that we should very seriously examine what and how great are the latent vices that could authorize us at once to level so specious a fabric to the ground. I do not recognize, in the view of things, the despotism of Turkey. Nor do I discern the character of a government that has been on the whole so oppressive, or so corrupt, or so negligent, as to be utterly unfit *for all reformation*.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Le Dix-Huitième Siècle* (1913), p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Nelson), p. 344.

The late Sir Bernard Mallet, in his book on his ancestor Mallet du Pan, who sat in the States General, quotes his authority for saying:

'France had experienced something like a resurrection during the last six years. Under a king, for so he described Louis XVI, who had shown nothing but virtuous and benevolent intentions, and who in the course of seven [fifteen?] years had chosen more upright Ministers than a whole reign often supplies, she had recreated her navy and her policy . . . seemingly dealt a fatal blow at the commercial monopoly of her rival (England). The resources of the country were immense, her natural wealth, the industry of her inhabitants and the taste displayed in her varied manufactures gave her a natural monopoly,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

And besides material prosperity what progress had been made in human thought! What a change had come over the minds of the ruling classes!

'A breath of humanity,' says Taine, 'that grew daily stronger, more penetrating, more universal had softened their hearts. . . . It is enough to read the *cahiers* of the États Généraux to see, that from Paris, the spirit of philanthropy had spread into the châteaux and abbeys of the provinces.' The character of the seigneurs is in no way feudal, they are 'men of feeling, gentle, very polite, nothing is further from them than the old harsh and despotic temperament. They wish to relieve the people and at home they spare them in every way they can.'<sup>2</sup> 'The most active pity filled all hearts,' says Lacretelle, 'what rich men feared the most was to appear unfeeling.'<sup>3</sup>

As to the King, how far had he shown himself, during these fifteen years of his reign, the feeble nonentity he has been represented in the pages of history? As events proved he had made two great mistakes—in recalling the Parlements and in consenting, against his better judgement, to the entry of France into the War on behalf of American inde-

<sup>1</sup> pp. 34, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Taine, i. 55, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Lacretelle, *Histoire de France au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> Siècle*, v. 2.

pendence. But these, like all his concessions, were made in deference to the people's wishes. As Soulavie, never too indulgent to the King, points out: 'Amidst the various measures proposed to him by his Ministers Louis XVI made choice of the most popular. He convoked the Notables upon the suggestion of Calonne, he convoked the States General upon that of Loménie, he doubled the Tiers État upon the recommendation of Necker,'<sup>1</sup> and Soulavie might have begun by saying he recalled the Parlements on the advice of Maurepas.

But, it will be objected, his choice of Ministers was bad. It is certainly true that, as Bertrand de Molleville pointed out, his great misfortune was not to have 'stronger, cleverer and more enlightened Ministers'<sup>2</sup>; the principal mistakes of his reign were made by them, not by himself. But were such men to be found? Except for his possible error in passing over Choiseul it is difficult to see what better appointments he could have made. In the words of the Marquis de Bouillé 'he chose for his Ministers men believed to be the wisest and most honest and who had a reputation for probity or talents,'<sup>3</sup> men admired not only by contemporaries but by posterity. Turgot, Malesherbes, Necker, Calonne, Loménie de Brienne, were men of ability who have found apologists, if not panegyrists, amongst historians. Who could have foreseen that they would one and all prove broken reeds, capable of no greater firmness and of less courage and wisdom than the King himself? As Soulavie observed:

'It is not known to the world that he dismissed M. Turgot, M. de Malesherbes, M. de Saint-Germain, twice M. Necker, M. Calonne and M. de Loménie because he perceived that the plans of these different Ministers tended to subvert the monarchy; he appreciated exactly their operation in his private meditations; during the incomprehensible blindness of these Ministers, the King alone beheld from a distance

<sup>1</sup> Soulavie, ii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, i. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Bouillé, *Mémoires*, p. 60.

the destiny and ruin of France. He was endowed with a spirit of foresight of which the Ministers above mentioned, the principal authors of his misfortunes, were totally destitute.' <sup>1</sup>

Yet for all this Soulavie is bound to admit that Louis XVI 'detached one by one the jewels from his crown.' How did this come to pass? How is it that the Revolution, which might with far more reason have occurred under the reign of Louis XV, broke out under a monarch whose one thought was to redress the grievances from which the people had suffered so long?

In the first place because Louis XV, though no stronger a character than Louis XVI, had made himself feared. At the first sign of rebellion he would have given the order to fire. The fearful end of Damiens who had attempted his life acted as a warning to all would-be regicides. The air of majesty he carried with him to the end imposed on all beholders. The very word 'King' still held a magic for the French people, profoundly monarchic at heart. The benevolent aspect of Louis XVI dispelled the awe in which the person of the King was held, and his extreme concern for the people's welfare deprived him of the respect which Louis XV by his very selfishness had inspired. As Soulavie says again, under former kings the monarch was the idol of the nation, under Louis XVI, on the contrary, the nation was the object almost of adoration to the King.<sup>2</sup>

Under Louis XV, sedition was put down with an iron hand; the *spirit* of rebellion would not have been allowed to spread. Under Louis XVI the new ideas of 'liberty,' subversive of the royal authority, were not only given a free vent—according to the cherished 'safety valve' theory of our own day—but were actually encouraged by Ministers who went beyond the demands of the people. It is thus, says Beaulieu, that 'the cause of revolutions must not be found in the dispositions of the people but in the conduct of governments who work out their own destruction by wishing

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 20.

to apply to the people new theories opposed to deeply-rooted customs legalized by time.' <sup>1</sup>

It has been well said that revolutions come from above. No powerful State can be brought low by popular insurrection, but only by the voluntary surrender of those in authority. And in France, not only the King's Ministers but—as in Russia before 1917—'liberally-minded' nobles, fired with visionary ideas of 'liberty,' were busy sawing away the branch on which they sat. The Comte d'Entraigues, who was later to become one of the most vigorous opponents of the Revolution, in his Memoir on the States General, attacked the monarchy, glorified republicanism, represented the French as a herd of slaves and wrote this call to insurrection: 'There is no form of disorder that is not preferable to the disastrous tranquillity procured by absolute power.' <sup>2</sup> We seem to have heard something of this necessity for rousing uneducated masses from their placid contentment in our own day.

It was thus not amongst the people, but amongst the upper classes and the intelligentsia that the idea of the Revolution originated. The general spirit of *fronde*, of vague discontent with all existing conditions, which under the influence of the philosophers had made itself felt at the beginning of the reign, had now become a definite spirit of revolt; the necessity for a total overthrow of the present system of government was openly proclaimed. The magical words of 'liberty,' 'equality' were 'repeated with enthusiasm by those who afterwards attributed to them all their misfortunes.' <sup>3</sup>

For whilst the tendency to insubordination and the passion for ridiculing their rulers which has always characterized the French nation—and never more than in our own time—had been given an impetus by the philosophers, it had not been carried beyond the region of words. Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, had constructed theories, coined

<sup>1</sup> i. p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Rocheterie, i. 575.

<sup>3</sup> Comte de Ségur, *Mémoires*, i. 14.

phrases, in a word, created an atmosphere; it was left to the lodges of the Freemasons and their auxiliaries the clubs to provide the organization of armed revolt.

These clubs, penetrated with Masonic influences, which had sprung into existence directly after the American war, now covered the whole country and formed centres where, as John Campbell Sutherland observed, 'the abuses to be abolished and the reforms to be effected were heatedly discussed.'<sup>1</sup> In 1786 a central club named the Club de la Propagande had been instituted by the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Condorcet and the Abbé Sieyès with the object of controlling public opinion. The club was the direct outcome of the Loge du Contrat Social, where the high Masons met in a council, second only in importance to the central committee of the Grand Orient.<sup>2</sup> The Jacobin clubs that followed later were the development of the same system.

It was thus that Freemasonry which, at the time of the Guerre des Farines, had been able to make its influence felt only in an abortive revolt, was now provided with a machinery for carrying theory into action. With the secret discussions in the Lodges and the open propaganda of the clubs, a perfect organization had been devised by which in a moment the word of command could be given at every point of France. A demonstration of its efficacy was seen in the 'Grand Peur' which broke out simultaneously all over the country on July 28, 1789.

But the factor that contributed more than anything to its success was its conjunction with the Orléaniste scheme for a change of dynasty. As Grand Master of the Grand Orient, Philippe d'Orléans had the vast organization of Freemasonry at his disposal; without this his plans of usurpation might have proved no more effectual than the intrigues of the Comte de Provence. On the other hand, without the money of the Duc d'Orléans the Lodges, even with the clubs at their command, would have lacked the

<sup>1</sup> *National Review* for September 1930, p. 650.

<sup>2</sup> Barruel, ii. 327.

means for paying the orators, agitators and other instruments of revolution. It was the coalition of Orléanist and illuminist Freemasonry that made the force of the Revolution of 1789.

In the face of this formidable conspiracy, what measures of defence were taken? In studying the *Mémoires* and letters of the period it becomes evident that the King and his Ministers were not alone in their weakness; the whole ruling class seems to have been struck by paralysis. A spirit of unreasoning optimism combined strangely with a spirit of defeatism. On one hand 'society' according to its usual custom in all times and countries shut its eyes resolutely to everything that was going on outside its own narrow circle and declined to believe anything unpleasant; so 'the salons having decided that all will be well, then all will be well (*les salons ayant décidé que tout ira bien, tout ira bien*).'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the few who foresaw danger seemed afraid to act. The monomania of the period, says a contemporary, was egoism; 'I do not want to compromise myself,' was the phrase constantly heard in the salons.<sup>2</sup>

This blindness of society must not be attributed to 'French frivolity' alone. The British ambassador, the Duke of Dorset, seems to have taken the situation no more seriously than the salons. 'The Duke of Dorset,' says M. Flammormont, 'entirely given up to his social amusements with the Comte d'Artois and the Polignacs, readily abandoned serious affairs to his assistants. . . .' In 1788 he enlivened Lent by a series of charming *thés dansants* at which the 'Court party' were always to be found.<sup>3</sup>

It was not that the noblesse were indifferent to the people; on the contrary they idealized them, and their eagerness to relieve their sufferings was shown during the bread shortage of 1789.

This grievous affliction which, as I have shown earlier,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taine, i. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, *Journées Mémorables*, ii. 93.

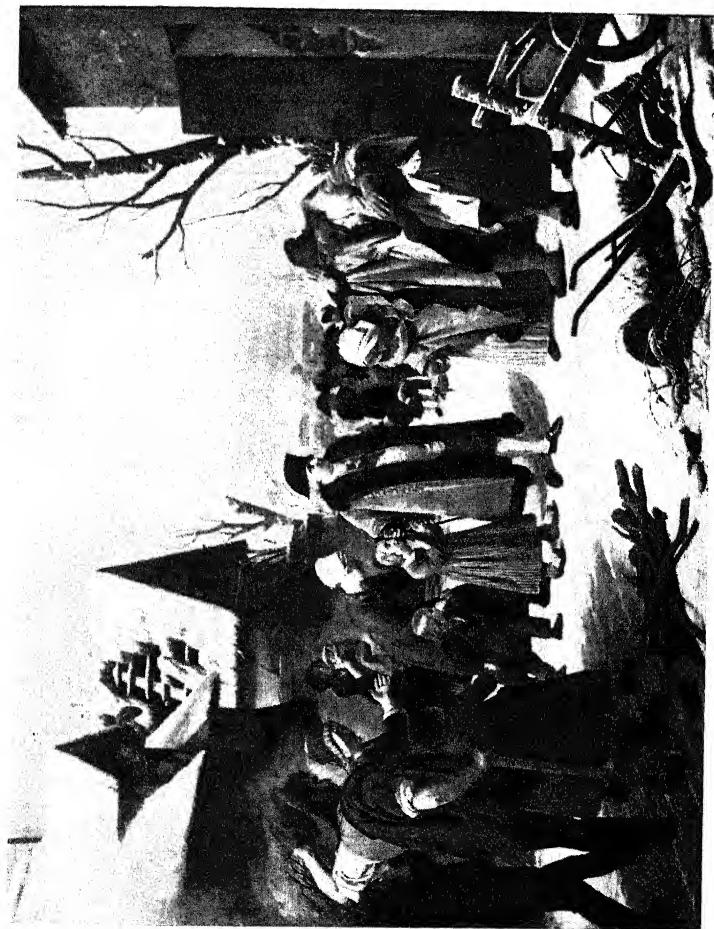
<sup>3</sup> Flammormont, *Correspondances Diplomatiques*, pp. xix and 508.

<sup>4</sup> *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, pp. 42-45.



was liable to recur at intervals throughout the history of France, had been provoked in 1789 by no mismanagement on the part of the Government, but by a malevolent outbreak of Nature which no one could have foreseen or averted. On July 13, 1788, the most terrible hailstorm within the memory of man burst over France, killed cattle, game and human beings and destroyed vast areas of crops. The King himself, returning from the chase, nearly fell a victim to the storm. Under these circumstances the 'possessing classes' did all in their power to relieve distress. The subscription lists for this object and for the four new hospitals Louis XVI had so long desired to build, brought in no less than 24 million livres—nearly £1,000,000 sterling.<sup>1</sup> In the environs of Paris one rich man alone distributed 40,000 francs (£1750) to the poor around him—and was massacred by the revolutionaries in the following year.<sup>2</sup> During the terribly severe winter that followed, everyone contributed to relieve distress, 'the rich vied with each other in protecting the artisans, the workmen and the poor.' 'The sacrifices that were made at this time were incalculable; the Duchesse de l'Infantado alone spent 300,000 livres (£13,125). The Archbishop of Paris contributed all his revenues and further ran into debt to the amount of about 400,000 livres (£17,500).' In the palaces, in the *hôtels* of the nobles, tables were laid in well-warmed rooms where all could come and feed; 'everyone was admitted indiscriminately.' In front of the houses of well-known families and in all the public squares huge fires were kept burning, at which night and day the poor came to warm themselves.<sup>3</sup> Louis XVI, says his page the Comte de Semallé, came himself to inspect these scenes, 'with his pockets full of gold which he scattered lavishly on all those who were feeling the rigour of the season. The picture in the Museum at Versailles representing the King visiting the unfortunate is of a rare accuracy. I can affirm this, for twice when I was

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, i. 185.<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Mme Vigée Le Brun*, i. 115.<sup>3</sup> Taine, i. 52; Montjoie, *Conjuration d'Orléans*, i. 201, 202.



"X" Photo

LOUIS XVI DONNANT DES AUMÔNES  
*From the Painting by Hersent in the Musée de Versailles.*



on duty I took part in these beneficent excursions.' <sup>1</sup> The picture in question is reproduced on the opposite page.

At the same time the Government raised an enormous sum to feed the people. It is important to note that the famous article on the 'Pacte de Famine' which appeared in the *Moniteur* of September 16, 1789—two months after the siege of the Bastille—attributed to the King the credit for saving the country: 'It was only by a sacrifice of 40 millions (£1,750,000) that Louis XVI—during the most distressing situation in which the finances had ever been found—preserved France from the horrors which threatened her on all sides.'

This testimony from a revolutionary source effectually absolves Louis XVI from the accusation of complicity with the monopolizers which had been brought against Louis XV. For monopolizers there were, though not the brothers Leleu, successors to the Compagnie Malisset of 1767. According to innumerable contemporaries it was the Duc d'Orléans and his agents who bought up supplies in order to drive the people to insurrection. The story of this infernal plot is given by Montjoie in his *Histoire de la Conjuration de Louis Philippe Joseph d'Orléans* and was discussed at length in my *French Revolution*.

Such then was the state of affairs when the States General met at Versailles on May 5, 1789. The people still had genuine causes for discontent; ancient abuses had not yet been entirely swept away; the reformation so far had only begun. But in the *cahiers de doléances* or lists of grievances they had been invited to send in from all over the country, they were able to make their voice heard, and the King was not only ready but eager to listen to their complaints and to redress their wrongs. There was therefore every reason for hope and none for despair.

But the deputies of the Tiers État arrived at Versailles full of prejudices against the Court and ready to detect

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs du Comte de Semallé*, page de Louis XVI, publiés . . . par son petit-fils (1898), p. 17.

slights or deceptions at every turn. Nearly all visited Trianon in order to see the splendour and luxury on which they had been told the Queen had squandered millions. The extreme simplicity of the little country-house, however, disappointed them deeply; they declared that the expensively furnished rooms were being concealed from them, and demanded to be shown the one incrustated everywhere with diamonds and adorned by pillars covered with rubies and sapphires. The Queen could not get over her amusement at these wild stories, and entertained the King with them; he suggested that their origin might be found in the paste stones with which Louis XV had decorated the theatre at Fontainebleau.<sup>1</sup>

The deputies had also been told that the King habitually over-indulged in food and drink. It is true that, like his ancestors, he had an enormous appetite, owing partly to a peculiar conformation of the Bourbon interior; Louis XIV, who could consume a prodigious quantity at a meal,<sup>2</sup> was found at the autopsy which took place after his death, to have a stomach double the normal size.<sup>3</sup> Added to this peculiarity inherited from the French side, was the Polish strain descending from Marie Leczinska, the grandmother of Louis XVI. Slavs are notoriously large eaters; the good Queen Marie Leczinska and her father Stanislas were no exceptions to the rule. In those days everyone ate more than they do to-day; the Girondin Isnard was known to devour a whole turkey at a sitting, except for the beak and the claws, even scrunching up the bones with his teeth, 'which were as strong as his stomach.'<sup>4</sup> The appetite of Louis XVI, of which so much capital has been made by his

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> 'The King (Louis XIV), the late Monsieur (the Duc d'Orléans), M. le Dauphin and the Duc de Berry were very large eaters. I have often seen the King eat four plates of different kinds of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a large helping of salad, roast mutton with garlic, two good slices of ham, a plate of pastry and then fruit and confitures.' *Mémoires de . . . la Duchesse d'Orléans, Princesse Palatine, Mère du Regent*. Paris (1832), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Boulenger, *Le Grand Siècle* (1912), p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> Victor du Bled, *Orateurs et Tribuns* (1891), p. 161.

detractors, was therefore hereditary, the accompaniment of his powerful physique, and provides no proof of gluttony.

The accusation of drink was equally unfounded. Mme Campan and one of the King's pages, the Comte d'Hézécques, both explain it by the fact that when he returned from hunting at Rambouillet he frequently went to sleep in his coach, and on arrival at Versailles would stumble upstairs rubbing his eyes and only half awake. Then some habitué of the Palais Royal would say loudly enough to be heard by all bystanders: 'He is dead drunk.' On one occasion a man who had uttered these words was arrested by the Guards, and the King, seeing him led away, asked what he had done. On being told, Louis XVI burst into a hearty laugh and said: 'Come then! I do not wish an imbecile like that to be imprisoned. Lead him outside the railings of the Château and tell him I am going to drink his health in a glass of lemonade.'

Never, says the Comte d'Hézécques, even after his hunt-suppers at which some of the company 'who had not his temperance' indulged too freely, did he see the King in the least affected by drink.<sup>1</sup>

The deputies of the Tiers État, disappointed in their hopes of seeing with their own eyes evidence of the Queen's extravagance or of the King's intemperance, cast about them for every imaginable grievance. When on the 2nd of May the whole Assembly went to the Château to be presented to the King, an invidious distinction was detected in the fact that he received the noblesse and clergy in his private room and the Tiers État in the room known as the Salle de Louis XIV.<sup>2</sup> Then the only deputy to whom the King addressed a word was one of the few representatives of 'Labour,' the Père Gérard. Louis XVI, struck by his peasant's dress, said to him: 'Good day, my good man.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Hézécques, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, i. 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettre d'un Député Breton*, published by d'Héricault, *Documents*, lière Série, p. 119.

This was enough to rouse furious jealousy in the breasts of the bourgeois deputies.

On the following day, when the Court and the Assembly went in solemn procession to the churches of Notre-Dame and of Saint Louis at Versailles to call down the blessing of God on their labours, the Tiers État discovered a fresh series of grievances.

First of all, their dress. As a matter of convenience the three Orders had been commanded to wear distinctive costumes so that it could be seen at a glance to which Order a deputy belonged. The Tiers État did not so much object to this arrangement as to the fact that the noblesse were dressed more smartly than themselves. For although both wore black cloth coats and breeches and black silk cloaks—the usual attire of Councillors of State—the nobles had a gold trimming on their coats and cloaks, wore white stockings instead of black, lace jabots, and white feathers in their hats à la Henri IV, whilst the cravats of the Tiers État were only of muslin and their hats were unadorned even by a button! <sup>1</sup> The discontent caused by this arrangement was represented by Mirabeau to his constituents as likely to have political consequences because ‘it was a humiliation for the Tiers État not to be allowed lace or feathers,’ and it led them to believe ‘that the other Orders must be proud of this distinction.’ <sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the clergy were attired in cloaks and surplices, the cardinals distinguished by their red capes and the bishops by their violet cassocks and square caps.

The pageant of May 4 must have been marvellously picturesque. After a wet day the weather had turned fine and sunny; at ten o'clock the King set forth with his family in a carriage and pair, the horses splendidly harnessed, with plumes on their heads, and preceded by the royal household, squires and pages on horseback, the falconers with their hawks on their wrists—a brave sight indeed!

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, i. 18; d'Hézécques, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 27.

At the Church of Notre-Dame the Assembly were waiting and the procession set forth on foot through the streets of Versailles, hung with rich tapestries, to the Church of Saint Louis. At the head marched the Tiers État, then came the noblesse, then the clergy, the Archbishop of Paris, bearing the sacrament, under a sumptuous canopy supported by the King's brothers and their sons. After these the King and Queen walked side by side. Louis XVI, who had refused a canopy, saying he wished for no distinction before God on whom he depended for strength to carry on his troubled reign, was dressed in cloth of gold studded with jewels, Marie Antoinette in a magnificent gown, her fair hair wreathed with flowers, her head carried with great dignity on her graceful neck and shoulders but with deep sorrow on her face. For whilst the band played joyous marches, the drums beat and the trumpets blared, a little boy of seven lay on a balcony looking down sadly on the gay procession—the Dauphin with hardly a breath left in his wasted body and who had only one month more to live.

On arrival at the Church of Saint Louis the Tiers État found a fresh grievance awaiting them—the seats arranged for them were behind those of the noblesse and the clergy. Thereupon a passage at arms took place between one of the deputies, Larevellière-Lépeaux, and the master of the ceremonies, the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, whose appearance in his jewelled mantle and plumed hat again awoke the envy of the Tiers État.

'Well, Monsieur the grand master of ceremonies,' asked Larevellière, 'what places have you reserved for us?'

'Monsieur, that goes without saying, the seats arranged in the two lateral naves.'

'Then, Monsieur the grand master of ceremonies, you place the deputies of the nation behind the two small privileged bodies which are only a feeble fraction of it? This shall not be!' And Larevellière thereupon seated himself firmly on one of the seats in the larger nave, declaring that he would not budge.



'But, monsieur,' expostulated Dreux-Brézé, 'I have made my arrangements.'

'Then they are impertinent arrangements that you ought not to have made.'

During this altercation the clergy and the noblesse were held up in the doorway, and Dreux-Brézé then pointed out very politely that the whole Court was being kept waiting outside. Failing, however, to dislodge Larevellière, he appealed to the rest of the Tiers État, who ended by rising and carrying off the fractious deputy to the seats provided for them.<sup>1</sup>

But this was not all. In the sermon he delivered at this service, Monseigneur de la Fare, Bishop of Nancy, made use of the words: 'Sire, receive the homage of the clergy, the respects of the noblesse and the very humble supplications of the Tiers État.'

The distinction here made was enough to do for the Bishop, who from that day lost all his popularity.<sup>2</sup>

What can one think of these men, who, summoned from all parts of France on this tremendous occasion to deliberate on issues of supreme importance to the whole nation, entrusted by the people to place their real grievances before the King, could waste themselves in brooding over imaginary slights, in hankering after lace jabots and plumed hats, could rage because they were asked to occupy that part of the church which would best accommodate their number? The noblesse were to be asked to surrender all their pecuniary and feudal privileges—which was what mattered to the people—and the Tiers État were not to yield even on the point of precedence. How truly did Napoleon observe: 'It was vanity that made the Revolution; liberty was only the pretext.' Such being the spirit of the Tiers État, what hope was there for the people?

In reality the so-called 'deputies of the nation' were representative mainly of the bourgeoisie; amongst them

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux* (1895), i. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, i. 93.

were included 210 lawyers, 175 tradesmen and cultivators—not peasants—162 magistrates, 12 country gentlemen and two bishops, many of them men of wealth and position, making a total of 622. This preponderance over the other Orders was further increased by the composition of the representatives of the clergy, comprising no less than 280 curés or village priests imbued with prejudices against the ‘privileged orders,’ who were thus vastly outnumbered from the outset. Individually and in their own homes probably few members of the Tiers État were subversive, but once in Paris they found themselves not only in the thick of political discussions but in a hotbed of intrigue.

Marie Antoinette had recognized from the beginning the folly of allowing the States General to meet at Versailles, and urged that they should be convoked at some town sixty leagues away from the capital. But Necker had overruled this wise opinion, and the deputies from the provinces were thus exposed to the strife of party interests and the corrupt influences of the Palais Royal.

This once peaceful garden of the Duc d’Orléans had now been transformed into a political arena, like the corner of Hyde Park near the Marble Arch in our own day, where self-appointed legislators, convinced of their own ability to regenerate the State, to draw up a constitution or dictate to the Government, were able all at the same time to address the crowds assembled, and ‘soap-box orators’ could inveigh against the nobles and the clergy. The effect of this agitation carried out under the eyes of the Duc and largely paid for by him was seen during the procession of May 4, when the cries of ‘Vive le Duc d’Orléans’ were uttered by women of the people with so menacing an intonation as the Queen passed by that she almost fainted at the sound.

The official opening of the States General took place next day, May 5, in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs at Versailles. On the entry of the King everyone rose to their feet and cries of ‘Vive le Roi!’ resounded throughout the hall. The Queen was dressed in a velvet tunic and a white

skirt sewn with silver spangles, a plain band of diamonds and a heron's feather on her head.

Louis XVI, magnificently attired and glittering with jewels, seated himself on the throne where, says his page the Comte d'Hézécques, he always appeared at his best, 'noble and majestic.' Marie Antoinette took her place in an armchair at his side. A deep silence reigned. Then the King rose to make his speech, the Queen rose also, the King signed to her to sit down, the Queen with a graceful curtsy declined and remained standing with the rest of the Assembly. Louis XVI spoke in a firm voice and with the greatest dignity. 'Messieurs,' he said, 'the day which my heart has long desired has come at last, and I see myself surrounded by the representatives of the nation which I glory in commanding.'

He went on to speak of the state of finances, of the inequality of taxation, paying a tribute to the noblesse for their offer, made on December 20, 1788, to renounce their pecuniary privileges, and expressing the hope that all three Orders would co-operate with him for the good of the State. He appealed to the traditional love of the French nation for their kings, and assured them that they could count on his interest for the public good as their sovereign and the best friend of his people. He ended by saying:

'May a happy accord reign, messieurs, in this Assembly, and may this epoch become for ever memorable for the welfare and prosperity of the kingdom. This is the wish of my heart, the most ardent of my desires; it is the prize I expect in return for the justice of my intentions and my love for the people.'

Whilst the King was speaking, a shaft of sunlight pierced through the curtained dome of the hall and illumined his forehead as if a blessing from Heaven had rested on him. The Assembly, impressed by this happy augury, gave vent to loud applause as he resumed his place on the throne.

The garde des sceaux, Barentin, in a longer speech then developed the King's views, referring to his desire to see

the burden of taxation fairly shared by the noblesse and clergy, to introduce greater liberty of the press, to bring about reforms in the punishment of crime, and reminding the Assembly that the King had already taken the first steps towards the abolition of all forms of servitude. Barentin also ended by entreating them to work together in harmony, to abjure the hatreds which had recently alarmed France and threatened public security, and to let zeal for the welfare of the nation fire their patriotic hearts.

The speech of the Comptroller General that followed somewhat damped the ardour aroused by the King and his mouthpiece. Taking a gigantic note-book from his pocket, Necker proceeded to speak for an hour and a half on the finances, then when his voice gave out he handed his manuscript to a substitute, who continued for another hour to read the interminable report. One cannot but admire the fortitude with which all three Orders sat for nearly two and a half hours on their backless benches listening to this array of figures. What wonder that an atmosphere of boredom settled down on the Assembly? The gist of it all was that the annual deficit amounted to 56,150,000 livres (£2,456,562), a large sum for those days but which, as Burke points out, could have been made up by 'a very moderate and proportioned assessment on the citizens without distinction.'<sup>1</sup> M. Jacques Bainville confirms this opinion: 'France then had about 25 million inhabitants; it was a matter of 6 or 7 francs a head. . . . One cannot therefore say the situation was desperate.'<sup>2</sup> It is indeed impossible to imagine that a great country like France with all her natural resources and flourishing industry could have gone bankrupt for a matter of less than 2½ million pounds sterling. Bertrand de Molleville declares that if Necker had had good intentions and half the talents he was supposed by his partisans to possess, the restoration of the finances would have been child's play to him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de France*, p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires*, 1. 34.

But whether the task was really beyond him, or whether his whole attention was absorbed in gaining popularity for himself, or whether, as Montjoie and Ferrières assert, he had been won over by the Orléanistes and was secretly working against the King, Necker now proved the most broken reed of all. And neither Necker nor the Tiers État took any steps to discover the real cause of the bread shortage. For although corn riots had been occurring throughout that spring and, as the Duke of Dorset reported on May 7, the scarcity of grain was general throughout the kingdom, although the people were crying out at the price of what bread there was, and everyone knew that supplies were being cornered by monopolizers, the Tiers État continued to quarrel over such questions as the union of the three Orders in a single Chamber, whether voting should go by Order or by heads, so that, as the Socialist Louis Blanc observes, 'the sacred question of feeding the people was lost to sight' and 'the Assembly in a way passed over social misery and the hunger of the people to other subjects'!!!

This is not the place to relate the history of the States General, of which some account was given in my *French Revolution*; suffice it only to indicate briefly the factions that divided the Assembly and the principal points of dispute.

Broadly speaking, there were four groups at the outset:

I. The staunch Monarchists in the Chamber of the noblesse, corresponding to our modern Tories, most of them favourable to reforms provided they did not weaken the authority of the King. Of these, one of the more democratic nobles, the Marquis de Ferrières, wrote: 'I can say this in justice to the noblesse, it was less their personal interest that touched them than that inviolable and sacred attachment they had always had for their King and country. The noblesse would have sacrificed their rights and privileges with joy; but they wanted to save the King and events proved that their fears were well founded.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, i. 66.

II. The Reformers, who might be described as Liberals, perfectly sincere and disinterested, loyal to the King, but often carried away by their zeal for the people into visionary schemes and flights of oratory that led further than they intended. The representatives of this party were the Comte de Lally-Tollendal, the Comte de Virieu, the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre in the Chamber of the noblesse and Pierre Victor Malouet and Jean Joseph Mounier in that of the Tiers État. These men, who were known as the 'Royalist Democrats'—advocates of a constitutional monarchy on the lines of England<sup>1</sup>—all recognized their illusions later on and bitterly regretted the impetus they had unwittingly given to the Revolution.

III. The Orléanistes in the Chamber of the noblesse whose aim was to make the Duc d'Orléans lieutenant-general of the kingdom and ultimately King of France. These included the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Comte de Mirabeau, the Marquis de Sillery, the Baron de Menou, the Comte de la Touche, Adrien Duport, and Alexandre de Lameth.

IV. The Subversives, with as yet no definite ideas of a Republic but only of class hatred and the overthrow of all authority. This group, small and uninfluential, which comprised Robespierre, Pétion, and Rabaut Saint Étienne, known as the 'Enragés,' formed the nucleus of the future Jacobin faction.

The two points mostly in dispute at the opening of the States General were (1) the union of the three Orders of noblesse, clergy and Tiers État in a single Chamber demanded by parties III and IV, agreed to by No. II, but resisted by No. I, and (2) the demand of the Tiers État that voting should go by heads and not by Order so as to give them the advantage of their numerical superiority.

It is necessary to understand all this in order to realize the problems by which Louis XVI was faced after the opening of the States General.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoire du Comte de Lally-Tollendal*, janvier 1790, p. 122.

At this moment the King and Queen were both distracted by a private grief. The little Dauphin, once so pretty and flourishing, had become in the space of a few months a wasted shadow, with bent back and legs so feeble that he could only walk a few steps with support, like a decrepit old man, says Mme Campan. His mind had aged as well as his body, and he would use phrases that came strangely from the lips of so young a child. Before his health failed he had a little garden in which he was fond of working. One day, whilst eating potatoes, he remarked: 'I prefer this food to any other because I cultivated it myself. I wish next year if I am better to sow corn, look after it and have it ground. This will make me care more for the poor people who provide it for us. They are perhaps not sufficiently esteemed.'<sup>1</sup> During his illness his sick fancy had inspired him with imaginary prejudices against his *gouvernante*, the Duchesse de Polignac, and he was heard to say: 'Go out, Duchesse, you have a passion for scents that upset me,' and the Duchesse used no scent at all. On the other hand he was devoted to his gentleman in waiting, and a short time before his death asked him for a pair of scissors. Then cutting off a lock of his hair he wrapped it carefully in paper and said: 'Here, monsieur, this is the only present I can make you, having nothing else at my disposal, but when I am dead you will present this pledge to my father and mother, and in being reminded of me I hope they will remember you.'<sup>2</sup>

The Queen sat often at his bedside with tears in her eyes. When she asked him if he suffered much he would answer: 'My good Maman, I only suffer when I see you weep.'<sup>3</sup>

And now the end had come. On June 4, exactly a month from the day when he had watched the procession of the States General from his couch on the balcony of the *Petite Écurie*, the little Dauphin breathed his last. The Queen was crushed with grief; the King shut himself up in his rooms ordering that he should be left alone and that no one

<sup>1</sup> Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, ii 301.

<sup>2</sup> Campan, 230, 231.

<sup>3</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 208.

under any pretext whatever should intrude upon his sorrow. But the Tiers État chose this moment to demand an audience for a deputation which presented itself at the Château and expressed great resentment at not being admitted. Louis XVI, informed of this, said sadly: 'Then there are no fathers amongst the Tiers État!' and the deputation was received on June 6.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this month the quarrels in the States General continued. On June 17 the Tiers État, considering themselves the sole representatives of the nation, took the name of 'National Assembly,' declaring that it was not necessary to wait for the King's sanction—'had the United States waited for the sanction of the King of England?' As M. Louis Madelin observes: 'It was a cry of revolt.'

On June 19 the question of the 'famine' was at last mentioned, but although a number of discussions took place and a 'Comité de Subsistances' was formed, nothing was done to get at the root of the trouble and bring the monopolizers to book. The *Moniteur* in its article on the 'Pacte de Famine' does not attempt to explain this point. All it can find to say with regard to Necker is that he 'always saw with horror an establishment which rested on human bones,' but that 'he was forced to follow the system he found established and could not succeed in overthrowing it. . . .' Pressed on this matter by a representative of the Commune of Paris and asked why he had not destroyed this murderous association, he answered with the words: 'I was unable (je ne l'ai pu).'<sup>2</sup>

This was the marvellous man for whom the people had clamoured and whose dismissal set all Paris aflame in the rising that led to the siege of the Bastille! The *Moniteur* article certainly tends to confirm Montjoie's opinion that Necker was afraid to irritate the monopolizers lest in revenge they should starve France completely, nor had he the courage to expose the Duc d'Orléans: therefore 'not daring to fight him he preferred to be his friend.' Malouet who, no doubt rightly, absolves Necker from actual com-

<sup>1</sup> Wéber, ii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 474, note



plicity with the plot, attributes his attitude to 'want of energy.'<sup>1</sup>

How then can Louis XVI alone be accused of weakness and lethargy? 'What struck me most,' Malouet goes on to say, 'was the inconceivable pusillanimity of the King's Council.'<sup>2</sup> It is difficult indeed to see what Louis XVI could do when the Assembly, chosen by the free vote of the people, and the Minister they acclaimed as their saviour, showed neither the energy nor even the desire to relieve their distress, and when the Duc d'Orléans, whom they had also made their idol, was employing agents to deprive them of bread.

Louis XVI at this crisis did, however, display a sudden energy. Finding himself frustrated in his efforts to introduce reforms through the National Assembly, owing to the recalcitrance of the Tiers État, he resolved to deliver an ultimatum to the effect that if they did not stop their quarrels and get on with the work of reform, he would carry through the necessary legislation on his own authority. In other words, he would dissolve the Assembly and rule himself.

This was the real meaning of the Séance Royale announced by edict on June 20, which has never been clearly explained by historians, but which appears quite obvious from the King's speech on that occasion. The Tiers État quickly guessed that this was his intention, and seeing their existence threatened, prepared to hold a stormy debate, but on arrival at their hall, the Salle des Menus Plaisirs, they found the door closed. The reason for this, alleged to have been a mere pretext, was quite a reasonable one; the hall of the Tiers État being the only one large enough to accommodate the whole Assembly for the Séance Royale, the halls of all three Orders were closed down so that the Salle des Menus Plaisirs could be got ready for the occasion. The fury of the Tiers État at finding themselves shut out was increased by the fact that it was a wet day, and the angry crowd of deputies who

<sup>1</sup> Malouet, *Mémoires*, i. 249.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

collected under their umbrellas at the entrance thereupon decided to repair to the Jeu de Paume or Tennis Court in order to hold an indignation meeting. This was done, and on the proposal of Mounier they swore not to separate until the Constitution had been firmly established. The oath was subscribed to unanimously but for one exception, a certain Martin d'Auch, who refused to lend himself to what he rightly considered as an act of revolt against the royal authority. In vain the other deputies overwhelmed him with insults, threatened him, in vain the astronomer Bailly, President of the Assembly, implored him to reconsider his decision, Martin d'Auch to his eternal honour stood firm and had to be smuggled out of the hall—with the help of Bailly—in order to escape the fury of the populace.<sup>1</sup> The papers afterwards announced that he was mentally deranged,<sup>2</sup> an accusation frequently brought in our own day against anyone who opposes the plans of revolutionaries, and which it is interesting to find dating back to so early a precedent. In the light of after events Martin d'Auch appears to have been the sanest man present, for Mounier lived to realize the folly of his action, and in 1792, driven from France by the Revolution, expressed his regret at having proposed the Oath of the Tennis Court.<sup>3</sup> Bailly perished miserably at the hands of the revolutionaries during the Reign of Terror.

Undeterred by the protests of the Tiers État, Louis XVI held the proposed Séance Royale on June 23. His speech had been drawn up with the help of Necker, who at the last moment basely deserted him, alleging as a pretext for remaining away from the Séance that certain alterations had been made in the text. These, however, were very slight, and the programme put forward by the King embodied a vast plan of reforms from which Necker could have no reason to disassociate himself. It is impossible to imagine anything more conciliatory than the manner in which the King

<sup>1</sup> Bailly, i. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Le Riche, i. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Mounier, *Recherches sur les Causes*, i. 296.

appealed to the better feelings of the Assembly. Thus he began by saying:

‘Messieurs, I thought I had done everything in my power for the good of my people when I resolved to assemble you, when I had surmounted all the difficulties by which your convocation was surrounded, when I went forward, so to speak, to meet the wishes of the nation by making plain beforehand what I wished to do for its happiness. It seemed to me that you had only to finish my work. . . .’

But the King went on to say:

‘The States General have been open nearly two months and have not yet been able to agree on the preliminaries of their operations. A perfect understanding should have arisen if only from love of their country, but a disastrous disaccord fills all minds with alarm. I wish to believe and I like to think that the French are not changed. . . .’

‘I owe it to the common good of my kingdom, I owe it to myself to make these disastrous divisions cease. It is with this resolve, messieurs, that I have again assembled you around me, it is as the common father of all my subjects, it is as the defender of the laws of my kingdom. . . .’

A secretary of state then read out the King’s commands. The resolutions of the Tiers État on June 17, claiming to be the National Assembly, were declared unconstitutional—as indeed they were—and therefore null and void. The States General were to continue their sittings in separate chambers, the three Orders were to debate in common on matters of general utility, but not on the prerogatives of the noblesse and clergy which were to be discussed by them in their own chambers and then, if desired, by representatives of each chamber in common. The King also ordered that the public should not be admitted to the sittings of the Tiers État which had been a cause of great disorder. Both Arthur Young and the Duke of Dorset expressed their astonishment at the liberty given to spectators in the galleries to interrupt the debates by ‘clapping their hands and other noisy expressions of approbation.’ Besides the confusion this

created, the temptation to win popularity distracted the deputies from serious discussion. The most trivial incidents were allowed to interrupt the proceedings as, on September 19, when 'patriotic gifts' were being made to the nation, and it was solemnly announced that Madame veuve Presvost had presented the Assembly with two large plates and a soup tureen.<sup>1</sup> It was essential to the dignity of the debates that such 'playing to the gallery' should be done away with, but the deputies resented any restrictions as an infringement of 'liberty.'

The King's plans for reform were then read out. The most important were as follows :

Article I. No fresh taxes were to be imposed without the consent of the representatives of the nation.

IV. The States General were to examine the state of the finances, which should be clearly put before them.

IX. When the formal intentions put forward by the clergy and noblesse of renouncing their pecuniary privileges had been carried out in their debates, it was the intention of the King to sanction them so that in the matter of pecuniary contributions there should exist no privileges or distinctions of any kind.

X. The *taille* to be abolished throughout the kingdom and either added to the *vingtième* or replaced in some way without distinction of rank or birth.

XI. *Francief* to be abolished.

XVI. Greater liberty to be given to the press, with due respect to religion and morals.

XXVI. The *gabelle* to be seriously discussed and means found for alleviating it.

XXVII. Other forms of taxation to be seriously considered, but with a view to maintaining the balance between the revenues and expenditure of the State.

XXVIII. The criminal laws to be discussed and reformed.

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 493.

XXX. The *corvée* to be entirely and for ever abolished throughout the kingdom.

XXXI. The right of *main-morte* to be abolished according to the example set by the King in his domains.

XXXII. The *capitaineries* or game laws to be restrained according to regulations the King proposes to make affecting his own pleasures.

The King ended the Séance with a short speech in which he said :

‘You have heard, messieurs, the result of my inclinations and my views which are in conformity with my keen desire to bring about public welfare, and if, by a fatality far from my thoughts, you abandon me in so fine an enterprise, alone I shall accomplish the welfare of my people, alone I shall consider myself as their true representative; and knowing your *cahiers*, knowing the perfect accord that exists between the general wishes of the nation and my benevolent intentions, I shall have all the confidence that so rare a harmony should inspire, and I shall walk towards the goal I wish to attain with all the courage and firmness with which it should inspire me.’

The King then ordered the Assembly to separate and left the hall, followed by the noblesse and part of the clergy. But the Tiers État remained seated in gloomy silence. It was then, on the repeated order of the master of the ceremonies, the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, to clear the hall in obedience to the King’s command that Mirabeau uttered his famous apostrophe: ‘We will only leave our places by the force of bayonets.’ The utterance was senseless, since there was no question of using force nor was there any object in the Tiers État continuing a sitting which they were free to resume on the following day. It is easy, however, to understand the indignation of the Tiers État. The King’s last speech was undoubtedly in the nature of a threat, intimating as it did that if they continued to obstruct the work of reform he would carry it through without them.

Apart from the possibility of dissolution the Tiers État saw in this a blow to their power. Whatever happened now the King had taken the wind out of their sails. If everything was to be settled peacefully with the consent of the clergy and the noblesse, what pretext would be left for agitation? Dr. Guillotin put the matter succinctly when, in answer to a fellow-deputy who asked his opinion of the King's declared intentions, he replied: 'Alas, they are only too favourable, which will perhaps rob us of the happiness of having a revolution.'<sup>1</sup> And indeed, had they been accepted in the spirit in which they were intended, Dr. Guillotin's famous machine might never have come into play, which would have deprived its inventor of his sole claim to immortality.

The failure of the Séance Royale was undoubtedly due mainly to the defection of Necker. Was this prearranged with the Duc d'Orléans? It is certainly significant that Bailly should have been awakened in the middle of the preceding night by three leading Orléanistes, including the Duc d'Aiguillon, who had come to tell him that Necker disapproved of the measures the King was to propose and would not be present at the Séance.<sup>2</sup> As President of the Assembly Bailly was informed, evidently in the hope that he would give the Tiers État the line to follow. At any rate the fact that their idol had stayed away naturally conveyed both to the Assembly and the people that he was not in agreement with the King. Necker did nothing to allay this suspicion. When, after the Assembly had risen, most of the Tiers État presented themselves before him in a body, Mme Necker threw fuel on the fire by telling them that Necker had offered to resign—news that created general consternation.

But once again Marie Antoinette intervened on behalf of Necker. Though cut to the heart by his desertion of the King, she seems to have clung to him as a sort of mascot, convinced that he alone could sway the public mind. So

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Bailly, i. 206.

indeed he could at this moment, but Necker had no intention of using his power except to increase his own popularity. Summoned to the Queen's apartment, he agreed after a long colloquy not to hand in his resignation, then on going out, carefully chose to walk across the Cour des Princes—a way the Ministers were never accustomed to take—in order to receive the plaudits of the crowd assembled there. Cries of 'Vive Necker!' arose on every side; a man of the people threw himself on his knees crying out: 'Monsieur, are you staying?' 'Yes, my children,' said Necker unctuously, 'I am staying with you.' The idol was then led home in triumph, 'everyone was in a state of emotion and intoxication of delight.'<sup>1</sup>

So whilst the Minister received the ovation he had done nothing whatever to deserve, the King had met only with angry murmurs. Entering the *petits appartements* on his return to the Château, Louis XVI noticed the *De Imitatione Christi* of Thomas à Kempis lying on the table, and as the cheers for Necker rose and fell beneath the windows he said sadly to Marie Antoinette: 'My dear, learn resignation from this book, for before long we shall have great need of it. Our happy days are passing away.'<sup>2</sup>

Yet at the Séance Royale, where he displayed the greatest firmness, he had gone further to meet the demands of the people than any King of France had ever done before. Arthur Young, in Paris at the time, could not understand why his programme was resented. 'The propositions were known to all the world: the plan was a good one; much was granted to the people in great and essential points.'<sup>3</sup> But for the defection of Necker this would no doubt have been recognized by the public.

It will be seen indeed that in the above quoted articles important reforms were ordained and the way was paved for others of a still more sweeping kind. If by Article IX the King did not deprive the noblesse and clergy of their

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, *Journées Mémorables*, i. 141.

<sup>3</sup> *Travels in France*, p. 175.

pecuniary privileges straight away, and if by Articles XII and XIII he declared that the rights of property should be respected and he did not abolish feudal and seigneurial rights or exemption from personal charges, it was because in the first place he had not the power to do so; his position at this moment was not secure enough to permit of his antagonizing the strongest supporters of the throne. In the second place such a step would not have accorded with his ideas of justice; the noblesse had on their own initiative offered in 1788 to renounce their pecuniary privileges and had renewed this offer, since the opening of the States General, on May 23 when, in obedience to the demands of the *cahiers*, that is to say of the noblesse of all France, their representatives had, as the King stated in Article IX, 'announced their formal intention' of carrying this offer into effect. As to their willingness to relinquish feudal rights, this was seen on August 4 when in one night the whole feudal system was abolished by them at a blow.

In allowing the noblesse therefore to have the credit for making their own sacrifices Louis XVI displayed a wisdom and a sense of 'fair play' that in normal times must have met with appreciation, but, as Arthur Young observed, the minds of the people had now been so inflamed by the seditious meetings at the Palais Royal and by the flood of revolutionary literature poured out since the assembling of the States General that 'nothing the King or Court could do would now satisfy them.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in France*, p. 177.



## CHAPTER II

### THE REVOLUTION OF 1789

IN following the course of what is collectively called 'The French Revolution' it is essential to remember that the term covers a series of revolutions inspired by different aims and carried out by different leaders. Thus there was the Orléaniste Revolution of 1789, the Girondiste Revolution of 1792, the Jacobin Revolution of 1793, and the Thermidorien Revolution of 1794. All these were the work of separate factions, and although certain agitators passed from one faction to another, the aims of each remained distinct.

The Revolution of 1789 was in no sense a Republican movement; it would hardly be too much to say that no one at that date, with the exception of La Fayette, thought of a Republic. This so-called Revolution was in fact nothing more than an Orléaniste rising backed by the Lodges with a change of dynasty as its immediate object. On this point the evidence of all contemporaries is so overwhelming that it admits of no dispute.

The conspiracy which had hitherto manifested itself only in spasmodic outbreaks—the attack on the house of the paper-maker Réveillon on April 27, 1789, and the bread riots during which, as in the *Guerre des Farines*, supplies were again not captured but destroyed—after the *Séance Royale* of June 23 was able to organize a state of continuous insurrection and disorders.

On June 25 the benevolent Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur de Juigné, who had ruined himself to feed the poor, now accused of intriguing against the popular cause and of instigating the *Séance Royale*, was attacked by a

mob and only escaped with his life through the speed of his horses and the intrepidity of his coachman.<sup>1</sup> On the same day the Duc d'Orléans at the head of a minority of the noblesse joined the Tiers État. A majority of the clergy followed suit.

Louis XVI, now distracted by the turn events had taken, listened alternately to Necker and the party which urged more concessions, and to the Court faction of the Comte d'Artois and the Polignacs who implored him to stand firm. Convinced of the necessity for putting down disorders, he assembled troops round Paris; but at last persuaded that the union of the three Orders was the only way to stop popular agitation, he went back on his declaration of the Séance Royale, and on June 27 ordered the majority of the noblesse and the minority of the clergy to join the Tiers État. This command met with strong protests from the noblesse, animated more by a desire to maintain the King's authority than by a consideration of their own interests. 'Messieurs,' said M. de Beaumetz, deputy of the noblesse of Artois, 'our duty is dictated to us by the device of two members seated here: "Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra!"'<sup>2</sup> In this debate, carried on 'in consternation and despair,' it was d'Eprémessnil, the one-time revolutionary *parlementaire*, who figured as the most resolute opponent of the union of the three Orders.<sup>3</sup>

The resistance of the noblesse was finally overcome by a second royal command. The Duc de Luxembourg, who had gone to report to Louis XVI on the result of their deliberations, returned with a letter in which the King assured them that his personal safety depended on their compliance, and even the Comte d'Artois now wrote to the same effect. The nobles then hesitated no longer. 'Messieurs,' cried the Marquis de Saint-Simon, springing into the middle of the hall, 'the King has told us that his life is threatened; let us hasten to the Château and form a

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Duc des Cars, *Mémoires* (1890), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 121.

rampart for him with our bodies!’ ‘It is no longer a matter for debating, messieurs,’ added the Duc de Luxembourg, ‘but of saving the King. His life appears to be in danger ; which of us could hesitate for a moment?’ At these words the nobles rose in silence, and, joined by the majority of the clergy, made their way gloomily to the hall of the Tiers État.<sup>1</sup>

The decision was a momentous one, as momentous as would be the abolition of the House of Lords in the midst of a national crisis. And, except for a momentary revival of the King’s popularity, it did nothing to relieve the situation. Fresh pretexts for agitation were immediately created.

Two days earlier Louis XVI had been given the only advice that might have stopped the Revolution. It came from d’Eprémèsnil, now the ardent defender of the throne, who, after obtaining an audience of the King, expressed contrition for his past conduct and put forward a plan of campaign which was briefly as follows : The King should assemble the members of the Parlement, denounce the Duc d’Orléans and his principal accomplices, judge them on the spot between closed doors, arrest them and hang them at once on the railings of the Palais Royal. The people would be too stupefied to move. Then the National Assembly should be dissolved as unfaithful to its mandates, and at the same time the King should be asked to accord the reforms asked for by the majority of the *cahiers* such as he had already expressed his intention to grant.<sup>2</sup>

Advice of the same kind was given to the King a little later by Foulon, but in the form of two alternatives : either to arrest the Duc d’Orléans or to go to the Assembly and demand the *cahiers* so as to satisfy the real wishes of the people.<sup>3</sup> D’Eprémèsnil’s plan of the double course to follow was wiser, providing as it did an invaluable formula for stopping a revolution, namely : ‘*Arrest the agitators and meet the just demands of the people.*’ For to arrest the agitators without meeting just demands would be only to provide a

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, i. 69.

<sup>2</sup> D’Allonville, ii. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Campan, p. 242 ; G. Bord, *La Conspiration Révolutionnaire de 1789*, p. 195.

legitimate grievance; on the other hand, to meet just demands without arresting the agitators would lead simply to the creation of fictitious grievances. It was necessary to do both simultaneously and at once. The gentle Malouet came to much the same conclusion when he wrote later that the best thing for the King to do would have been to accede to the people's wishes, give them the liberties they asked for and then say: 'The first sedition-monger who tries to stir up trouble and insurrections will be judged and executed on the spot.'<sup>1</sup>

But d'Eprémesnil's project revolted the kindly spirit of Louis XVI, to whom all violent methods were abhorrent. It is questionable, moreover, whether it was not now too late. In order to carry out the scheme proposed it would have been necessary to have reliable forces at one's disposal and a Napoleon to lead them. And by this time the army was not to be relied on. The inflammatory propaganda of the Palais Royal, the seductions of the *filles de joie* employed by the conspirators, the doctrines of the Masonic lodges into which the soldiers had been lured, and above all the gold of d'Orléans, had enticed too many of the French Guards from their allegiance; only the foreign regiments of Swiss and Germans, whose ignorance of the French language had made them proof against the teaching of sedition, could be depended on to stand firm. If the plan proposed by d'Eprémesnil had been followed earlier, directly after the Affaire Réveillon, if the Duc d'Orléans had then been arrested and the Palais Royal closed down, the Revolution might have been nipped in the bud, but now things had gone too far and any display of force could only lead to civil war, the one thing Louis XVI would never bring himself to face.

Even the maintenance of law and order was represented as an infringement of the liberty of the people. The assembling of troops round Paris had been a necessary measure after the attack on the Archbishop of Paris, not only for the

<sup>1</sup> Malouet, i. 282.

protection of peaceful citizens but of the Assembly itself, and also for the convoying of food supplies. But the populace, worked up by Mirabeau's violent oratory, rose against this as an act of despotism. Eleven deserters from the Guards imprisoned at the Abbaye as a matter of ordinary military discipline were delivered by a mob of 20,000 people. The King, in response to the supplications of the Assembly, pardoned the insurgents.

But the revolutionary character of the Assembly had now become apparent. 'Everything,' says Marmontel, 'that could animate, irritate and stir up the people was permitted and provoked, everything that could restrain or repress their movements aroused the strongest protests in the States General. They called liberty the right to extinguish all liberty.'<sup>1</sup> Dumont observes that the principal instigators of insurrection were to be found amongst the 'minority of the noblesse,' that is to say the Orléanistes, even more than amongst the Tiers.<sup>2</sup>

Finding himself in this complete impasse, it seems that Louis XVI again contemplated the plan of dissolving the States General and ruling himself; the intention was not openly declared, but his change of Ministry at this crisis lends colour to the supposition. For as long as Necker remained at the helm it was clear that he would continue to be the veritable King of France and that all considerations of public interest would be subordinated to his craving for popularity at the expense of the royal authority. The Comte d'Artois hated him and so far forgot himself as to shake his fist in his face, calling him a 'fichu bourgeois' and telling him to go back to his own little native town. The day after this outburst, July 11, Necker received the order to resign and leave the kingdom. The other Ministers left at the same time and a new Ministry was formed under the Baron de Breteuil, with the Maréchal de Broglie as Minister of War and Foulon as Comptroller General in place of Necker.

<sup>1</sup> Marmontel, iv. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Étienne Dumont, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau* (1832), p. 70.

In looking back on those days of July 1789 it is amazing to think that the dismissal of so insignificant a personality as Necker should have led to an insurrection culminating in an event as momentous as the destruction of the Bastille. Left to themselves, the people would certainly not have been roused by the news of Necker's departure to the pitch of frenzy which seized Paris on the 12th of July. The insurrection had been skilfully engineered. Whether Necker himself was a party to the agitation is problematic, but one incident lends colour to Montjoie's opinion that he kept in touch with the Orléaniste conspirators.

Necker had been dismissed with the utmost gentleness. The King reminded him that he had four times expressed the wish to resign, and now the moment had come to accept his resignation. Louis XVI therefore asked him to retire as quietly as possible, adding that he hoped later on to give him marks of favour. It was generally believed that Necker had acceded to the King's request, and Lally-Tollendal, who still retained his faith in him, announced his dismissal in touching terms to the Assembly, saying he 'had left so quietly that his most faithful servants, his dearest friends, even his family, knew nothing of his departure.' Yet Necker, for all his secrecy, had not omitted to whisper a word into the ear of Latouche, the Chancellor of the Duc d'Orléans.<sup>1</sup> Surely a strange circumstance—this one confidant! Thus the news quickly reached the Palais Royal and the signal was given for the rising.

That Necker had admirably served the purpose of the conspirators is shown by the extraordinary volte-face executed at this juncture by the anonymous authors of the chronicle printed later by the *Moniteur*.<sup>2</sup>

On June 19 a *Comité de Subsistances* had been formed in

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, i. 90, 110.

<sup>2</sup> The *Moniteur*, not published till November 1789, is retrospective, beginning with the assembling of the States General in May of that year, and including a daily chronicle, of which the authorship is unknown. A great part of this is identical with the *Histoire de la Révolution par deux Amis de la Liberté* of which Carlyle made so much use. See my *French Revolution*, p. xii.

the Assembly which had at last decided to deal with the question of the scarcity of corn. The report of the Committee was read to the Assembly on July 4, and at the same time a memoir of Necker's announcing that the King had provided fresh supplies which had cost him no less than 25,000,000 livres—over a million pounds sterling—and adding that, in order to economize wheat, rye bread would be eaten by all classes without distinction and served on the King's table. Necker here paid a handsome tribute to Louis XVI, saying: 'We can conjecture what our misfortunes would have been without the help due to the foreseeing solicitude of the King . . . the subsistence of the town of Paris and the surrounding provinces is a matter of daily solicitude to his Majesty. The King continues to make the greatest efforts to obtain the little assistance one can hope for in all the countries of Europe. . . . I must not omit to say that the King has this year multiplied help in money in order to alleviate the lot of the poorest class of the people . . . amidst the scarcity and with the high price (of bread) the King has done all that was humanly possible and all that could be hoped for from a monarch and a father. Bread, already very dear in Paris, would have gone up considerably in price but for the subsidies the King has accorded to the bakers and that he continues to pay.'<sup>1</sup> And so on. This testimony to the King's solicitude is omitted in the report given by the *Moniteur* but is to be found in the *Archives Parlementaires*.<sup>2</sup> The chronicle afterwards published by the *Moniteur*, mouth-piece of the revolutionaries at this date, now concluding that Necker was not to be depended on to betray the King's cause, proceeded under the date of July 10, to make an attack on the Government and particularly on Necker. Referring to the *Comité de Subsistances* it said that evidently the King's Ministers were unable to find a remedy for the famine and that the Committee had appealed to Necker for an explanation, but 'the Government took refuge in a guilty silence and would communicate nothing. Everyone

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 124.<sup>2</sup> Buchez et Roux, i. 192.

knows the memoir of M. Necker,' it goes on to say, 'the Committee asked for documentary evidence, or at any rate a summary of the proofs on which it was based. He replied that he would speak about it. We ask ourselves why a Minister who has received so many tokens of affection both from the people and the States General should behave towards them in such an insignificant manner.' On the following day the *Moniteur* chronicle refers to the Government as the 'most guilty, the most criminal Ministry of France.'<sup>1</sup>

But in the very next number, dated two days later, the dismissal of the Ministry having intervened, this event is declared to have caused universal consternation whilst Necker is described as departing 'with tranquillity of soul, the reward of a clear conscience. . . . It would be impossible to describe the depression into which all citizens have fallen. Everyone seemed to be regretting his father, grief was depicted on every countenance.'<sup>2</sup> 'The exile of this one man,' the chronicle adds a few pages later, 'becomes a public calamity. One cannot think of his disgrace without a shudder; it is to be regarded as the signal for three frightful scourges, famine(!), bankruptcy and civil war.'<sup>3</sup>

So the man who had been accused of holding up information which would have enabled the *Comité de Subsistances* to feed the country was now proclaimed to be the only defence against the famine, and the fall of 'the most guilty and criminal Ministry of France' was to be regarded as a public calamity! As long as Necker had seemed disposed to uphold the King's authority he had been treated with contempt by the Orléanistes and Mirabeau had referred to him as 'that charlatan of a Necker, the king of the *canaille*.'<sup>4</sup> But now that he had failed the King, Mirabeau declared that they 'could only regard with terror the abyss of misfortune into which the country would be dragged by his exile,'<sup>5</sup> and his name was coupled with that of the Duc d'Orléans. The

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 145.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.<sup>4</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 104.<sup>5</sup> Bailly, i. 332.



wax busts of these two saviours of the country were paraded through the streets of Paris as a signal for the rising which was to place Orléans on the throne with Necker as his Minister.

At Versailles the news of the frightful confusion into which the capital had been thrown was received with satisfaction by the revolutionary elements in the Assembly, with incredulity at the Château. The riotous scenes taking place at the Palais Royal, the call to arms, the formation of a *milice bourgeoise* for the protection of the citizens against hordes of brigands, the 'charge' of the Prince de Lambesc, the attack on the Invalides and finally the march on the Bastille—all these events following each other in rapid succession were announced by couriers hasting from the demented city; yet no one seems to have realized their full significance. In the night of July 12 to 13, Joly de Fleury, Attorney-General of the Parlement, had hurried to Versailles in order to urge the King to take measures against the impending insurrection and, unable to obtain an audience, sought the Minister for War, Maréchal de Broglie, but could not succeed in persuading him that the situation was serious.<sup>1</sup> During the day of the 14th, whilst the cannon of the Bastille could be heard at Versailles, the inhabitants of the Château regarded this as a good augury, showing that the city was being well defended. When towards nightfall people arrived in haste from Paris saying that the Bastille was in the hands of the mob and that de Launay with some of his officers had been barbarously butchered, they were received with derision and old army men declared it was impossible that the Bastille, defended by trained soldiers, could have been captured by a crowd of ill-armed civilians, 'such a thing,' said they, 'has never been known.'

The truth is that no one then dreamt of a revolution. As Mme de la Tour du Pin, at Versailles that summer, observed later on: 'Ah! it is very easy now, fifty years after those events, and when one has seen the consequences of the

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 163.

Court's weakness, to say how it ought to have acted! But at that time, when no one even knew what a revolution was, it was not such an easy thing to make up one's mind what to do.'

The King, however, took the situation more seriously than his entourage; whilst the courtiers displayed their usual gaiety he said: 'Messieurs, I could not laugh as you do.'

'But,' replied the Comte de Vergennes, 'can the King really believe the exaggerated reports which have been brought to his Majesty?'

'Messieurs,' said Louis XVI, 'much has been said about blood having been shed and faithful servitors massacred; I do not know yet whether all this is true, but doubt alone should prevent one smiling.'

Meanwhile, seeing in the disorders of Paris only the work of brigands, he steadfastly refused to accede to the reiterated demands of the Assembly that the troops should be withdrawn. It has often been related, as proof of his 'imbecility,' that when the news of the fall of the Bastille was finally brought him by the Duc de Liancourt, he contented himself with observing: 'But this is a revolt!' to which the Duc replied: 'No, Sire, it is a revolution.' M. Madelin, quoting this famous anecdote, places it in the evening of July 14, saying that the Duc de Liancourt, bringing the news, had gone 'to wake up the King who naturally had been hunting all day.' But this does not at all accord with the account given by the *Moniteur* in its report of the debate in the Assembly on July 14. For during that momentous day the representatives of the nation were engaged in discussing the proposed Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, displaying a detachment from events no less remarkable than that attributed to the King by the story that he had gone hunting. It was not till after they had resumed their sitting at five o'clock in the evening that a messenger brought the news that an attack on the Bastille was in progress. At that moment a deputation from the Assembly was with the King, again urging him to withdraw the troops.

A second deputation was now sent to tell him that the people had marched on the Bastille, and it evidently found him wide awake, for he replied with extreme lucidity that he had ordered the troops to co-operate with the *milice bourgeoise*, and he added: 'The anxiety you express with regard to the disorders of the city must be felt by all hearts and deeply affects mine.' A deputy of the noblesse now arrived from Paris at the Assembly bringing the news of the murder of de Launay and presumably of the fall of the Bastille, but either this was not passed on to the King or was represented to him by his advisers as an unconfirmed rumour, for he showed no knowledge of it in the message he sent later to the Assembly by the second deputation, in which he said: 'Messieurs, you rend my heart more and more by the account you give me of the troubles of Paris; it is not possible to believe that the orders given to the troops can be the cause. You know the reply I made to your previous deputation and I have nothing to add to it.'<sup>1</sup> No, comments Marmontel, these orders certainly were not the cause, for they were confined simply to policing the city and keeping the peace.<sup>2</sup>

What then becomes of de Liancourt's story of waking up the King with the news that the Bastille had fallen? The source is at once suspect, for de Liancourt was an Orléaniste. Moreover, the Baron de Besenval, in command of troops that day in Paris, relates that it was he who first brought the news of the great event to Louis XVI. After the fall of the Bastille, Besenval says: 'I went to Versailles where the astonishment felt in no way corresponded to the importance of what had happened. This is the reason. No one had cared to tell the King the whole story of this disastrous day, so that he only knew of events by fragments which left him in uncertainty. He learnt from me all the facts in their full significance both for the present and the future.'<sup>3</sup>

Much has been made of the entry in the King's diary for this day which consists of the one word 'Rien.' But the

<sup>1</sup> *Monteur*, i. 159, 160.

<sup>2</sup> Marmontel, iv. 204.

<sup>3</sup> Besenval, ii. 372.

point never explained is that the record kept by Louis XVI, preserved in the Archives Nationales, was in no sense a journal of events but simply a note-book in which he jotted down personal memoranda—his private engagements, the days on which he took medicine or went to mass, but above all hunting and shooting notes. The bag is always carefully noted; in fact the diary was more than anything a game-book. One would not look in Mr. Lloyd George's golfing diary during the Great War for an account of Passchendaele. The word 'rien' thus clearly signifies that the King had *not* gone hunting that day, or the fact would have been duly noted, and the *Moniteur* shows that he was occupied with public affairs. He had probably not heard of the fall of the Bastille when he made the entry that night in his diary.

Louis XVI, however, was deeply affected when all the events of July 14 were related to him. It was not the destruction of the Bastille that distressed him, for a plan to demolish the old fortress and replace it by a 'Public Square to the glory of Louis XVI' had been drawn up by the official architect, Corbet, in 1784. This plan is still preserved at the Musée Carnavalet. But the story of the hideous crimes committed in Paris and of the continual disorder in that city cut him to the heart, and on the following day he went on foot to the Assembly, without his guard, accompanied only by his two brothers, and in a touching speech implored its aid in restoring law and order. 'It is I, who am one with my nation, it is I who trust in you! Help me in these circumstances to ensure the salvation of the State: I await this from the National Assembly, from the zeal of the representatives of my people. . . .' Then, yielding to the demands of the Assembly, he agreed to the withdrawal of the troops, leaving it to the *milice bourgeoise* to keep order in Paris.

This concession, like all concessions made to popular clamour, elicited momentary applause, only to be followed by redoubled violence. When the King ended his speech the Assembly rose as one man around him; outside the hall

a cheering crowd awaited him. So immense was the concourse that it took him an hour and a half to reach the Château. Walking between his two brothers and followed by the Assembly, which had formed itself into his escort, his triumphal progress might well have led him to believe that the step he had taken was the right one, and that in yielding to the will of the Assembly he had regained the love and loyalty of the people. How could he realize that the people had no will of their own, but were swayed to and fro at the bidding of the agitators like an orchestra at the movement of the conductor's baton? The deluded crowds had really been made to believe that the troops assembled to protect the citizens of Paris had presented a menace to their liberty and now shouted themselves hoarse with cries of 'Vive le Roi!'; even the bodyguard and the Swiss, later to be massacred in the name of liberty, caught the contagion and joined in the applause. So amidst waving banners, to the sound of military marches, of beating drums and trumpets blowing fanfares, Louis XVI at last reached the foot of the marble staircase.

On the balcony of the Cour de Marbre the royal family had assembled, awaiting his return: the Queen with the little Duc de Normandie, now the Dauphin, on one arm, holding Madame Royale by the hand; the Comtesses de Provence and d'Artois and Madame Elisabeth on either side of her. Soon the sons of the Comte d'Artois arrived and kissed the Queen's hand. The Queen embraced them and held the Dauphin towards them; the little princes pressed him to their hearts and kissed him again and again; Madame Royale, slipping her head under the Queen's arm, joined in the caresses. But the people were calling for the King, and Louis XVI arriving at that moment appeared on the balcony amidst the shouts and benedictions of the crowd.

All now appeared to be peace and joy. But beneath the acclamations that had greeted the King on his way from the Assembly angry murmurs had arisen, mainly against

the Comte d'Artois—'Vive le Roi! in spite of you, Monseigneur, and of your opinions!' several voices cried. Other murmurs were directed against the Queen and the Polignacs. As Marie Antoinette appeared on the balcony, Mme Campan, mingling with the crowd, heard a woman whose features were concealed beneath a black lace veil say to the man beside her: 'Ah, the Duchesse is not with her!' 'No,' said the man, 'but she is still at Versailles, she is like a mole, she is working underground, but we shall know how to dig her out.'

Marie Antoinette was well aware of the hatred Mme de Polignac had incurred and had been careful not to let her appear on this occasion. Mme Campan had been sent to fetch the Dauphin from her, and the Duchesse, understanding the reason for this order, had burst into tears, saying: 'Ah, Madame Campan, what a blow this is to me!' Now at last she understood how fatal her friendship had been to the Queen.

But the people were wrong in identifying Marie Antoinette with the Polignac set at this moment. Many writers have fallen into the same error by including her in what was known as the 'Court party' consisting of the Comte d'Artois, the Princes de Condé and Conti, the Polignacs and their friends. In reality the Queen now occupied an isolated position; wrapped up in her grief at the death of the first Dauphin she had little heart for public affairs. As early as April of this year the Comte de Salmour, the Saxon ambassador, had written: 'The Queen only shows herself once or twice a month at Mme de Polignac's or Mme de Lamballe's, not moving out of her apartments where she lives absolutely alone.'<sup>1</sup> What her political opinions were it is difficult to know precisely, for a gap occurs here in her published correspondence, but that they differed widely from those of the 'Court party' is certain. The breach that had arisen between her and the Comte d'Artois over the double representation of the Tiers État was never

<sup>1</sup> Flammermont, *Correspondances Diplomatiques*, p. 227.

healed. Again, whilst he and the Polignacs detested Necker, the Queen continued to believe in him and, as we have seen, even after his defection at the Séance Royale which had deeply grieved her, had urged him not to resign. The Comte de Vaudreuil, the lover of Mme de Polignac and the Comte d'Artois' greatest friend, relates that in the morning of that day, whilst the King was at the Assembly, he went to the Château fearing for the life of the Queen and resolved to protect her. But she received him coldly, saying: 'We need no longer to be guarded; the King is granting more than anyone dared to hope, those who are evilly disposed are disarmed, unity will be restored.'

'Dare I ask the Queen,' answered Vaudreuil, 'whether M. Necker has followed the King to the Assembly?'

'No, why do you ask this question?'

'Because if action is not taken against the principal Minister to-day, the monarchy will be destroyed to-morrow.'

The Queen dismissed Vaudreuil with an imperious gesture. The Comte, backing towards the door, said, bowing deeply: 'I am grieved to see that I have incurred disgrace with the Queen, but never will I hesitate between favour and my duty.'

But when the July revolution broke out and the cries of 'Vive Necker!' mingled with those of 'Vive le Duc d'Orléans!', Marie Antoinette admitted to him she had been mistaken. 'Vaudreuil,' she said, 'you were right. Necker is a traitor. We are lost!' and the tears rolled from her eyes.<sup>1</sup>

The appointment of Foulon on the dismissal of Necker, made at the instance of the 'Court party,' was also clearly not in accordance with the views of the Queen. For Marie Antoinette distrusted Foulon. When it had been a question of the recall of Necker in 1788 she had written to Mercy: 'There is also Foulon if M. Necker absolutely refused. But I think him a very bad man (*très malhonnête homme*)

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance Intime du Comte de Vaudreuil et du Comte d'Artois*, éditée par Léonce Pingaud (1889), i. pp. xxvii, xxviii.

and public confidence would not be restored by him.' <sup>1</sup> In these last words the Queen judged rightly, for although the saying attributed to Foulon: 'Let the people eat grass' was proved to be a fable, and he was shown to have spent large sums in providing work for the people, he had made himself unpopular and his appointment in succession to Necker was ill-advised.

It was therefore from ignorance of the Queen's real opinions that the people included her in the 'Court party' during that summer of 1789. There is no mention by contemporaries of her presence in the Orangerie of the Château, where the Comte and Comtesse d'Artois, the Comtesse de Provence, the King's aunts and the Polignacs were said to be making merry whilst the siege of the Bastille was in progress. In reality it seems that they had merely walked there, listening to the military bands of the regiments quartered at Versailles, and that Mme de Polignac with the idea of stimulating their loyalty had regaled the soldiers with refreshments and drinks which perhaps raised their spirits too effectually. But as Ferrières who relates this incident observes, 'they only knew confusedly what was going on in Paris' and the news of the siege of the Bastille had not yet reached Versailles.

It now became clear, however, to the King and Queen that no one's life was safe in France and for a moment they contemplated flight. But in the end Louis XVI determined to stay and face the situation—a decision he afterwards deeply regretted. Marie Antoinette, urged perpetually by Joseph II to seek refuge with him, firmly declined to leave her husband and children and replied to her brother with the words: 'My duty is to remain where Providence has placed me and to present my body to the daggers of the assassins who wish to reach the King.' <sup>2</sup>

But whilst the King and Queen resolved to remain at their posts they felt it essential to ensure the safety of their family and friends. Already a placard demanding the head of the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 122.

<sup>2</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 176.



Comte d'Artois had been posted up in Paris; the imprecations uttered against him and against Mme de Polignac had reached the ears of the King. Accordingly Louis XVI ordered his brother to leave the kingdom, and he set forth with his wife and children on the night of the 16th. The same order was addressed to the Prince de Condé, who at first refused to obey, but ended by taking his departure 'shedding tears of rage.'

That evening the Queen sent for her friend and begged her to fly during the night. But the Duchesse de Polignac answered: 'No, Madame, I will not leave, they can do what they like with me but I must share your dangers.'<sup>1</sup>

Then the Queen, weeping bitterly, said: 'But think! the King is going to-morrow to Paris. If they asked him . . . Yes, I fear everything. In the name of our friendship, go whilst there is still time; remember that you are a mother.' And as the King entered the room at this moment, she said: 'Come, Monsieur, help me to persuade our faithful friends that they must leave us!'

'Yes,' said Louis XVI, 'you must follow the Queen's advice. Go—I ask you; if necessary, I command you. My misfortune obliges me to send away those I love and respect. I have just given the order to the Comte d'Artois to depart; I give you the same order—go, and do not lose a single moment. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

The Polignacs obeyed. At midnight, before starting forth, the Duchesse received a farewell note from the Queen. 'Good-bye, fondest of friends. . . . How dreadful this word is! but it is necessary. . . . Here is the order for the horses. I have only strength left to embrace you.'<sup>3</sup>

At this bitter moment of parting all misunderstandings were forgotten, all differences of opinion blotted out; Marie Antoinette remembered only the friend who had been her solace in the lonely days before her children came to comfort her and who throughout fifteen years had shared

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 131.

her joys and sorrows. For in spite of momentary lapses the Duchesse was not ungrateful, and she showed the depth of her devotion by dying of a broken heart when the news of the Queen's terrible end was brought to her four years later in Vienna.

Meanwhile events had been moving swiftly in Paris. On the evening of the 15th, after the King had returned to the Château, a deputation from the Assembly had gone to the capital as 'angels of peace'<sup>1</sup> to announce that the troops were being withdrawn, and received a tremendous ovation at the Hôtel de Ville, at the end of which La Fayette was proclaimed commander of the Paris militia and Bailly mayor of that city. The cry now went up for the return of Necker.

Louis XVI, anxious to leave nothing undone that could conciliate the people, agreed to recall their idol, and also, at the instance of the Queen, the two Ministers Montmorin and Saint-Priest, whom he had been persuaded by the 'Court party' to dismiss as unworthy of confidence at the same time as Necker. The gratitude shown by Saint-Priest to the King, and more particularly to the Queen for her intercession in his favour, may be seen in his published *Mémoires*, which certainly tend to show that his enemies at the Court were not altogether wrong in their suspicions of his fidelity.

Louis XVI had now yielded on every point, and if, as we are frequently asked to believe, the whole trouble had been caused by the 'reactionary' policy of the 'Court party,' how is it that now they had all emigrated, that the troops had been withdrawn and Necker was recalled, peace did not ensue? What cause was there left for agitation? But as in the case of every concession made by the King, the result was merely to increase the audacity of the conspirators.

As usual, however, they allowed him to enjoy a brief moment of popularity by way of encouragement to further surrenders.

<sup>1</sup> Bailly, ii. 17.

With this end in view or, as Montjoie assents, in the deliberate hope of his assassination by the populace, the King was now persuaded to go to Paris. Louis XVI was not wanting in courage; to attribute his concessions to cowardice is to misunderstand his character completely. If he yielded to clamour it was because he honestly believed it was his duty to meet the demands of the people, but never, on a single occasion, did he show fear for his personal safety. When urged not to face the risks this entry into Paris involved, he thought only of the horrors of civil war which he was anxious at all costs to avoid, and cried out uncontrollably: 'No, no, I will go to Paris; numbers must not be sacrificed to the safety of one. I give myself up, I trust myself to my people and they can do what they like with me!'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly on this 17th of July he entered Paris and presented himself defenceless to a city in arms. For whilst the capital had been cleared of the troops he had assembled to keep the peace, not only the *milice bourgeoise* but the civil population had been allowed to provide themselves with weapons of every description; even monks and women carried swords and muskets; nearly 200,000 men were under arms. Through this threatening crowd Louis XVI, with only four of his gentlemen and twelve of his bodyguard on foot, passed slowly in his carriage, escorted by La Fayette at the head of the National Guards and preceded by men dragging the guns and the flag of the Bastille. On either side of him were serried rows of people carrying scythes, pickaxes, guns and lances, half-drunken *poissardes* sang and gambaded amongst the crowd, whilst cannons, their mouths stuffed with flowers, bore the ironical inscription: 'Your presence has disarmed us!'

No cheers greeted the King along the route, for La Fayette, parading the ranks on his famous white horse, had given orders that hats were not to be raised and that instead of 'Vive le Roi!' the people were to cry 'Vive la Nation!'

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 141.

At the entrance to Paris, Bailly the Mayor had presented Louis XVI with the keys of the city, saying:

'These are the same that were presented to Henri IV. He had reconquered his people; now the people have reconquered their King.'

It was indeed a captive monarch who drove at foot's pace through the streets, pale and distressed, cut to the heart by this reception. As the procession turned out of the Place Louis XV into the Rue Royale a shot was fired. Both Beaulieu and also Montjoie, whose account is most circumstantial in its details, declare that the ball was aimed deliberately at the King but, missing its mark, passed close behind his carriage and struck a tall woman in the crowd who fell back dead. It was held inadvisable to make any enquiry into this affair.

So the King arrived unharmed at the Hôtel de Ville and entered the doorway beneath a threatening archway of naked swords and pikes—'that vault of steel,' says the Comte de Virieu's biographer, 'formed by Masonry triumphant.'<sup>1</sup>

Bailly then came forward again and presented Louis XVI with the tricolore cockade, the colours of the Duc d'Orléans, but also of the town of Paris, and the King, accepting it as the latter, placed it on his hat. Again applause greeted the act of surrender, and for the first time cries of 'Vive le Roi!' were heard as Louis XVI, wearing the badge of the enemy, showed himself on the balcony to the crowd.

But the King was not deceived by these acclamations, and when asked to address the assembled councillors could only say brokenly: 'My people can always count on my love.' Amongst the crowd collected in the hall were, however, some still loyal subjects, some whose eyes filled with tears, who stretched out their hands towards him, crying out: 'Our King, our father!'

The speech of the 'Liberal' noble, the Comte de Lally-Tollendal, paying a touching tribute to the King for all he had done in the cause of liberty, evoked more applause and

<sup>1</sup> Costa de Beauregard, *Le Roman d'un Royaliste*, p. 152, cf. Bailly, ii. 65, note.

even impassioned cries of 'Vive le Roi!' and as Louis XVI re-entered his carriage to return to Versailles it seemed indeed as if it was he who had reconquered his people.

At the Château the Queen had spent the day shut up in her rooms grieving for the friends who had left her, racked with anxiety for the safety of the King, and she was now waiting with her children and Madame Elisabeth in an agony of suspense on the great marble staircase.

'This princess, as virtuous as she was amiable,' says a contemporary writer, Lemaire, 'whom monsters later on accused of never having loved her husband, was absolutely in despair. As soon as she heard the King's carriage entering the Cour Royale she ran towards him holding the Dauphin in her arms, then breathless and almost fainting she fell into those of the King who was no less moved than she was. Holding out one hand to his children who covered it with kisses, with the other wiping the tears from the eyes of Marie Antoinette and Madame Elisabeth, Louis XVI smiled again and knowing nothing of the incident that had taken place in the Place Louis XV, he kept on repeating: 'Happily no blood was shed and I swear that not a drop of French blood shall ever be shed by my orders.'<sup>1</sup>

Only five days later the ghastly murders of Foulon and Berthier showed how delusive was the peace that Bailly and Lally-Tollendal imagined to have been established in Paris. Foulon had clearly incurred his fate by advising the King to arrest the Duc d'Orléans, for according to Mme Campan his memoir to this effect was read aloud by Madame Adélaïde in the presence of the Comte Louis de Narbonne, who repeated it to Mme de Staël, through which channel it reached the ears of the Orléanistes. Berthier de Sauvigny, the *intendant* of Paris, on the other hand, had incurred the animosity of the conspirators by his energy in provisioning the capital which they were trying to starve into rebellion. Thus as Bailly the Mayor of Paris observed: 'A plan had been formed to kill these two men who had been fetched

<sup>1</sup> Lemaire, i. 365; Poujoulat, p. 121.

(to Paris) on purpose and the people had been stirred up against them.’<sup>1</sup>

Six days later occurred that astounding phenomenon known as *la Grande Peur* (the Great Fear) when ‘couriers dispatched by a dark and occult power’<sup>2</sup> appeared simultaneously in towns and villages spreading false alarms so that on the same day, July 28, and almost at the same hour, all over France the panic-stricken people flew to arms.

From this moment anarchy reigned throughout the country, not only were châteaux burnt down and nobles driven from their estates, but harmless and benevolent bourgeois were made victims of atrocities too horrible to relate.

The abandonment of all feudal rights and privileges by the noblesse on August 4, that ‘night of sacrifices,’ in accordance with the King’s desires expressed at the Séance Royale of June 23, did nothing to stem the tide of revolution; on the contrary, it only increased the fury of the revolutionaries whose great scheme from the beginning had been to encourage the people to believe that the nobles and clergy would never give up their seigneurial rights. The 4th of August thus upset all their calculations and they set to work with redoubled energy on their campaign of massacres and burnings.

There was, of course, the usual outburst of popular rejoicing when at the end of the sitting on this famous night Louis XVI, on the proposal of Lally-Tollendal, was proclaimed ‘restorer of French liberty.’ Once more the unhappy King, accepting this title, imagined that the Revolution was ended, and on August 13 led a thanksgiving to Almighty God for the splendid manner with which the noblesse had crowned his own work of reform. ‘I accept with gratitude the title you give me,’ said the King, ‘it answers to the motives that guided me when I collected around me the representatives of my nation. My desire is now to ensure

<sup>1</sup> Bailly, ii. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Lombard de Langres, *Histoire des Jacobins* (1820), p. 37.

public liberty with you by the return to peace and order which is so necessary. Your enlightened views and your intentions inspire me with the greatest confidence in the result of your deliberations. Let us go and pray Heaven to help us and render thanks to Him for the generous feelings that prevail in your Assembly.' The King and the Assembly then repaired to the chapel to sing a *Te Deum*.<sup>1</sup>

After interminable discussion on the King's right of 'Veto' and on the framing of the Constitution had taken up the time of the Assembly, Louis XVI was asked to sanction the decrees of August 4 with regard to the abolition of feudal rights and privileges. The King, who had not yet been formally deprived of his authority to give or withhold his consent to the framing of laws, naturally supposed that he was expected to express his opinion on the new decrees and therefore went through them with great attention. On these occasions he was always most methodical and, writing-paper being one of his pet economies, he would tear a sheet in two or four to provide the exact space required for his notes. Then with the same remarkable common-sense he had shown in his annotations to the schemes of Turgot and to Vergennes' memoir on the American War, he drew up a long report on the decrees, analysing them clause by clause and either expressing his approval or suggesting certain difficulties that might stand in the way, wording such criticisms in the most gentle and conciliatory language—'would it not be more advantageous to do so and so?' 'Would not the Assembly consider this point?' Nowhere did the King strike a despotic note, or place any obstacle in the path of reform. He ended with the words: 'Therefore I approve the greater number of these articles and I will sanction them when they have been drawn up into laws.'<sup>2</sup> This report was read to the Assembly on September 18.

But the Assembly were determined to rob the King of the last vestige of authority, and on the motion of Le Chapelier, seconded by Mirabeau, the King was informed that he was

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 335.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 487.

not asked to sanction the decrees but to promulgate them. Louis XVI, disregarding the insolence of this message, very sensibly pointed out that laws could only be promulgated when they had been drawn up in legal form; however, as the Assembly persisted, he accorded his 'sanction pure and simple.'<sup>1</sup>

This was on September 21. On the following day it was announced in the Assembly that in order to help the finances of the kingdom Louis XVI had decided to send all his plate to the mint. The Assembly protested, but the King replied: 'I am much touched by the sentiments the Assembly expresses for me but I persist none the less in my resolution which is only fitting, owing to the scarcity of money. Neither the Queen nor I attach the least importance to this sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup>

On September 24 Necker, in a debate on the finances, informed the Assembly that the King and Queen proposed to have only one house, which might lead to an economy of 20 millions.<sup>3</sup>

Louis XVI had now shown himself ready to meet the just demands of the people on every point: he had dismissed the Ministers objected to by them and given them back their idol Necker, he had withdrawn the troops whose presence they resented, without regard for his own safety, during his visit to Paris on July 17, he had, in the words of Necker, 'done everything that was humanly possible' to alleviate the scarcity of bread, he had introduced sweeping reforms and sanctioned the destruction of the feudal system to the point of imprudence, he had sent his own brother and other princes of the blood out of the country, and with them friends to whom he was personally attached, in order to remove any suspicion of 'reactionary' influences at the Court. Every genuine grievance had now been redressed.

It should be remembered, moreover, that the great reforms of Louis XVI were not extorted from him by force on the part of the revolutionary leaders, but were those he had endeavoured of his own free-will to introduce from the

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, p. 496.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501; Bailly, ii. 389.

<sup>3</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 507.



moment he ascended the throne. Much indeed had already been accomplished before the Revolution began. The enlightened legislation carried out during his reign may be best appreciated by the following chronology:

1774. Immediately on his accession Louis XVI had started the work of reformation by placing Turgot in control of the finances and introducing the free circulation of grain. In the same year he founded the School of Medicine in Paris.

1775. The *droits d'octroi* were reduced, prison reform was begun, the death penalty for deserters was abolished.

1776. The King signed the six edicts of Turgot comprising the abolition of the *corvée* which only the resistance of the Parlements had prevented from becoming law. In the same year he reduced his household.

1778. *Tailles* and *vingtièmes* were reduced.

1779. The King abolished servitude and the right of *mainmorte* in his domains.

1780. Further reductions were made in the King's household, hospital reform was begun, prison reform continued, the form of torture known as *la question préparatoire* was abolished.

1784. Relief was given to the Jews.

1786. Hospital reform was actively carried out; help had already been given to the deaf mutes and provision made for lost children.

1787. Fresh steps were taken towards the abolition of the *corvée* throughout the kingdom, more reductions were made in the King's household, liberty was given to Protestants and Jews.

1788. The administration of justice was reformed, all forms of torture were done away with, greater liberty given to the press, steps taken towards the abolition of *lettres de cachet*.

And now in 1789, by the decrees of the Séance Royale of June 23, the King on his own initiative had renounced the right of the Crown to impose taxes without the consent of the representatives of the people, he had sanctioned the equality of taxation, he had abolished the *taille*, *francfief*, the *corvée* and the right of *mainmorte* throughout the kingdom, he had urged the alleviation of the *gabelle* and the reform of criminal laws, he had restrained the game laws and given still greater freedom to the press. Finally, on August 4, all the abuses of the feudal system had been swept away by the free-will of the privileged classes and the King had given his sanction to these decrees.

Thus the work of reform on which for fifteen years the King's mind had been set was now complete. Yet the result of his efforts and his many sacrifices had been to raise against him a host of enemies. By conferring greater freedom on the press and liberating the Protestants and Jews he had antagonized the Catholics and encouraged the anti-religious spirit; on the other hand, writers took advantage of the licence given them by publishing seditious pamphlets and obscene libels on the Queen, whilst Protestants and Jews showed the King little gratitude, and in many cases joined themselves to his assailants. As to the people, though in the main loyal at heart, they were prevented by the agitators from realizing all the King had done for them, whilst the benefits bestowed on them roused hostility amongst some of the 'privileged.' Thus Louis XVI found himself confronted by two classes of antagonists among the noblesse: the Orléanistes who, for the purpose of placing their own candidate on the throne, represented the King as an autocrat, and those supporters of the old régime to whom all progressive ideas were abhorrent, who cursed him for his too democratic spirit. It should be noted that the derisive comments on the King's bourgeois appearance and manners emanated too often from men whose privileges he had attacked; many of the coarse epithets hurled at him by the mobs during the later stages of the Revolution had

been coined not only in the Palais Royal but in the *Œil de Bœuf* at Versailles. It is true that the opponents of reform constituted only a minority of the noblesse, but their complaints were loud enough to swell the chorus of invective against the King.

Even in the eyes of certain nobles who remained true to him Louis XVI was held to have gone too far along the path of reform. Royalists, both past and present, have declared that he displayed deplorable weakness, that he betrayed the interests of the privileged classes and even the rights of the throne; thus, writes a contemporary, 'Louis XVI was the author of his own death.'<sup>1</sup> And the Marquis de Bouillé observes that 'the monarch placed himself at the head of a conspiracy against the monarchy which he sacrificed in the hope of making his subjects happier, for no prince ever loved his people better and none ever suffered so much from their ingratitude.'<sup>2</sup>

But in order to understand the King's conduct one must endeavour to see the situation from his point of view and to enter into his ideas, which necessarily remained incomprehensible to his contemporaries since they were far ahead of his time and can only be explained in the political phraseology of our own day. Thus it may be said that Louis XVI was by temperament and conviction a Liberal, in that he felt it his duty to yield, even against his better judgement, to what appeared to be the popular will and to 'explore every avenue' with a view to conciliation rather than oppose measures which seemed to him inadvisable by obstinate resistance. In the fight for the monarchy which followed later he showed himself a 'non-resister,' through no spirit of cowardice but because he believed, as sincere Pacifists do to-day, that wars settle nothing and quarrels should be settled by peaceful arbitration. Devoted as he was to the people and unable to detect the intrigues of the

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance secrète de plusieurs grands personnages . . . pendant les dernières années du règne de Louis XVI*, par P. J. A. Roussel, Paris, 1802, p. i.

<sup>2</sup> Bouillé, *Mémoires*, p. 59.

conspirators acting in their name, he could not imagine that in the end the appeal to reason would not prove wiser than the appeal to force; thus as time went on he was led from one concession to another until at last only two courses were open to him—complete surrender to the will of the people represented by the Assembly, or civil war. Between these there was soon to be no middle path. And because he had determined, as he said, that not a drop of French blood should ever be shed on his account he was prepared to follow this policy of conciliation to the bitter end, at the cost of his throne and his life. That it would also cost the lives of thousands of his subjects and lead to the shedding of seas of French blood, who could have foretold at the time? He could but walk by the light of his own day when the wildest imagination could not have conceived the developments to which the Revolution was to lead.

However mistaken we can now see Louis XVI to have been and bitterly as he might be blamed by those of his contemporaries who held that his first duty was to uphold the royal authority, modern opinion, which is so largely impregnated with the ideas of Liberalism and Pacifism, cannot logically condemn him.

## CHAPTER III

### THE OCTOBER DAYS

THE position of the Queen was now more isolated than ever. The loss of her friends had brought her no compensation in the form of restored popularity.

'Everyone is flying,' she wrote to the Duchesse de Polignac on August 12, 'and I am only too happy to think that all those who interest me are far away from me. So I see nobody and I am alone in my rooms all day. My children are my only resource and I have them with me as much as possible.'<sup>1</sup>

In another letter which M. de la Rocheterie gives under the date of August 23, 1790, but which both the contemporaries, Montjoie and d'Allonville, place a year earlier, she wrote again to Mme de Polignac:

'I am assured that the way by which this letter will reach you is a safe one. So I can tell you, dear heart, that I love you tenderly. My health keeps up but my heart is overwhelmed with troubles, sorrows and anxieties. Every day we hear of new misfortunes and the greatest of all for me is to be separated from all my friends. I neither see nor meet eyes or hearts that understand me. I should be too happy if I only knew they were all in safety. . . . Adieu, dear heart, nothing but death can make me cease to love you . . . speak of me to your husband, your daughter and Armand; I love them all three with my whole heart.'<sup>2</sup>

The Marquise de Tourzel had now taken the place of Mme de Polignac as *gouvernante* to Madame Royale and the Dauphin. Louise Elisabeth Félicité de Croÿ d'Havr  was the widow of the Marquis de Tourzel who had been killed

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. p. 193.

out hunting with Louis XVI three years earlier, and she was living in retreat when called upon to take charge of the King's children.<sup>1</sup> Marie Antoinette, in handing them over to her care, had said:

'I had entrusted them to friendship; I entrust them now to virtue.'

In a long memoir written out for her guidance the Queen gave Mme de Tourzel minute details on the Dauphin's health and temperament and instructions on the training of his character. He is good-hearted and affectionate but violent in his temper. 'He is of great fidelity when he has promised anything but he is very indiscreet, he easily repeats what he has heard said, and often without wishing to tell an untruth he adds what his imagination suggests. It is his greatest fault and which must be well corrected. . . . He will say and do all one wishes when he is in the wrong but he will only utter the word pardon with tears and the greatest difficulty.'<sup>2</sup>

It was characteristic of Marie Antoinette that even at this critical moment she was able to give her mind calmly to the task of preparing her children for the position they were born to occupy. Always sanguine to the end, she never dreamt that in three years the monarchy would have ceased to exist. This faculty for living in the present moment was an unfailing source of strength; at the least improvement in the situation she took fresh heart and believed all would yet be well.

Yet the Queen had now become the principal object of hatred to the conspirators who never ceased vilifying her in speech and print. Throughout this year of 1789 a fresh flood of pornographic libels—of leaflets, pamphlets and brochures—were poured forth by the gutter press which the police were either unable or unwilling to suppress. The *Essai Historique sur la Vie de Marie Antoinette*, which had

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Tourzel was created a hereditary duchess by Louis XVIII under the Restoration.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 133.

appeared in 1781, was now republished, then came *L'Autrichienne en Goguettes ou l'Orgie Royale*, *Le Petit Charles IX ou Médécis justifiée*, the *Jugement Général de toutes les Putains françoises et de la Reine des Garces*, and many more. Amidst volleys of insane abuse the Queen is accused of liaisons with a host of lovers—'le beau Dillon,' the Comte de Vaudreuil, the Baron de Besenval, even the old Abbé de Vermond her former preceptor, and her arch enemy the Cardinal de Rohan. It is significant to note that the name of Fersen, which flows so readily from the pens of modern libellists, rarely occurs in these contemporary tirades and then only as a passing fancy of which she had quickly tired. No, the one lover attributed to her throughout all these is still the Comte d'Artois whom she had never even liked and with whom she was now barely on speaking terms, whilst again and again recurs the vilest accusation of all, that of unnatural affection, not only for the Duchesse de Polignac, but for Mme de la Motte, the thief of the diamond necklace to whom she had never spoken in her life!

These libels must be seen to be believed; nothing of the kind could be printed under the free Constitution of our own country to-day. I have glanced through a number of them, ranging from 1789 to 1792, with a feeling of physical nausea at the realization that the human mind could be capable of such imaginings—the foulest language accompanied by pictures of an obscenity that only a sex maniac could devise. Mercifully these are for the most part hidden from the public eye; the Bibliothèque Nationale assigns them to what is aptly known as 'l'Enfer' where all such filth lies buried. For indeed to look into them is like a glimpse of hell itself; here is no ordinary malevolence born of human passions, of envy, hatred or the spirit of revenge, but the blasphemings of devils to whom all nobility, all virtue is abhorrent, revelling in lust and moral perversion in its most hideous forms. Verily the powers of darkness were arrayed against this unhappy woman. One shudders as one thinks that she herself, so gentle, so sensitive to beauty,

so filled with simple, kindly emotions—too kind, say those who knew her, to believe in the malignance of her enemies—may have had to look on these things.

But, apart from revilings which can only be attributed to an Occult Power, what was the reason for the hatred directed against Marie Antoinette by her political opponents? Well-informed contemporaries explain it by her strength of character. Just as Pitt was feared and hated by the revolutionaries of France because it was his genius which checked the spread of their doctrines abroad, Marie Antoinette, by her strength and courage, provided the principal obstacle to the success of their plans in France. She had, says the Comte de la Marck, ‘a power of prompt decision and an energy of will of which she gave proof on more than one occasion. It was precisely this force of resolution that Louis XVI lacked; the enemies of the monarchy early realized this and directed all their attacks against the one whose influence they feared. So it will be observed that from the first days of the Revolution they spoke of the King’s virtues but were silent on those of the Queen. Emboldened by their successes the revolutionaries did not hesitate to designate Marie Antoinette as the great culprit because they guessed she had in her an energy and courage which would offer a firm resistance to them.’<sup>1</sup>

This opinion is confirmed by the royalist Democrat Mounier, eye-witness of the events of October 1789, who says that when the march on Versailles was planned by those who wished to destroy the King’s authority, they intended to lead him to Paris and keep him there under their control, but that ‘in order to carry out this project it was necessary to remove the King’s Guards and all those who might have defended his liberty. *They feared the courage of the Queen* and therefore it was necessary to give her up to the fury of the people.’<sup>2</sup>

Hence the murder of the Guards in the morning of

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Appel au Tribunal*, i. 65.



October 6, and the hideous imprecations uttered that day against Marie Antoinette.

The march on Versailles was no spontaneous movement of the hungry women of Paris such as it has frequently been represented in the pages of history; the whole thing had been arranged by the Orléanistes many weeks beforehand, and as early as August 30 an abortive attempt had been made by the Marquis de Saint Huruge, one of the Duc d'Orléans' noisiest agitators, who had set forth at the head of 1500 unarmed men but had been turned back by La Fayette. Rumours of the intended invasion had reached the Court and again for a moment the King contemplated flight, but the idea of running away from danger was always repellent to him, and in the end he decided to remain and face the situation.

The Comte d'Estaing, commander of the National Guard of Versailles, hated the Queen and sympathized with the revolutionary party, but in consultation with the Comte de Saint-Priest, who had received a warning letter from La Fayette, he now advised reinforcing the defences of Versailles with troops that could be absolutely relied on, and it was decided that the Régiment de Flandres, distinguished for its excellent discipline, should be brought in to support the National Guard of Versailles and the King's bodyguard. According to a decree of the National Assembly it was necessary to obtain the permission of the municipality before calling fresh troops into a town, and this was obtained on September 18, the municipality declaring in an official report that 'it was indispensable for the safety of the town, of the National Assembly and of the King to have as soon as possible the assistance of a thousand men belonging to disciplined troops' and the King was asked to authorize this reinforcement.<sup>1</sup>

It was thus not by the wish of the King but by the request of the municipality of the town that the Régiment de Flandres was moved to Versailles on September 23. The

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Le Roi, *Journées du 5 et 6 Octobre* (1867), p. ii.

spirit of the regiment was excellent, as was that of the Chasseurs de Lorraine quartered near by at Meudon; these added to the King's bodyguard would have been well able either to cover the King's retreat or defend the Château if they had stood firm and had been given freedom of action. But the moment they arrived at Versailles the conspirators started to corrupt them by the same methods of money and *filles de joie* that they had employed with the Guards of Paris. The Duc d'Orléans raised a loan of six million livres in Holland for the purpose.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the colonel of the regiment, the Comte de Lusignan, was an Orléaniste and a member of the minority of the noblesse in the Assembly who had gone over to the Tiers État on the 25th of June. Under these influences the regiment that had arrived crying 'Vive le Roi!' adopted the tricolore and was soon turned from its allegiance.

Now it was the custom for a regiment already quartered in a town to entertain a fresh one arriving there, at a banquet; accordingly the bodyguard of Versailles invited the Régiment de Flandres to a magnificent repast in the opera hall of the Château on October 1. The officers of the regiment of the Trois Evêchés and of the National Guard of Versailles were also invited. It is possible that, as Beau-lieu declared, this entertainment was arranged not only as a matter of custom, but as a means for counteracting the seditious propaganda of the Orléanistes and reanimating the loyalty of the troops. If so it was a perfectly legitimate and diplomatic measure.

At any rate the banquet had the desired effect, and the soldiers became so ardent in their expressions of attachment to the King and the royal family that a message was dispatched, asking them to honour the feast with their presence. The King had just returned from hunting, and the Queen was sitting sadly alone in her apartments when her ladies came to tell her of the gay scene taking place, begging her to go and see it, taking the Dauphin with her.

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, i. 273.

Marie Antoinette at first refused, realizing instinctively that such an action might be misconstrued, but when it was suggested that the sight would amuse the Dauphin, she relented, and the King coming in at that moment, they decided all to go together.

The effect on the soldiers was indescribable. As the royal family took their places in a box overlooking the banquet, the whole hall rang with shouts of 'Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine! Vive le Dauphin! Vive la famille royale!'

Such was the enthusiasm that the Queen was persuaded to go down to the great horse-shoe table where the feasters sat and show the Dauphin to them. In a white silk gown with bands of pale blue, with blue and white feathers in her curled and lightly powdered hair, and a necklace of turquoises around her throat, she had never appeared more beautiful. On one arm she carried her little son dressed in a sailor suit of lilac taffetas, with a white sash fringed with silver, a lace collar framing his childish white neck, his beautiful fair hair falling in curls over his shoulders; with the other hand she led Madame Royale wearing green and white. The King walked beside her, still in his hunting clothes.<sup>1</sup>

One of the Swiss officers then asked to be allowed to take the Dauphin, and the Queen handed him over with a beating heart. But the little boy knew no fear, and having been placed on the table, walked along it smiling happily, undisturbed by the shouts of applause that rose around him. The Queen received him back into her arms with relief and kissed him fondly.

What wonder that at the sight of this charming and tragic family the gallant men assembled at the banquet, rose and drew their swords, swearing eternal fidelity to their King? What wonder if, as the Queen moved amongst them, they vowed to protect her from the malevolent designs of her enemies? What wonder if, in the flood of their restored loyalty, five or six of the officers of the Régiment

<sup>1</sup> Walsh, *Journées mémorables*, ii. 88.

de Flandres tore off the Orléaniste cockades and cried: 'Down with the tricolore cockade. Vive the white cockade, it is the right one.' It was said afterwards they had trampled the tricolore under foot; if they had done so it would hardly have been surprising, but the story, circulated by the Duc d'Orléans himself, was proved to be a fable. The band of the Régiment de Flandres did, however, play the air from *Richard Cœur de Lion*:

'O Richard! ô mon Roi! l'univers t'abandonne!'

At this expression of their own feelings the soldiers burst into renewed applause, and it seems probable that after the royal family had retired the banquet became, as regimental dinners are apt to do, a scene of revelry at which loyalty was expressed in noisy language. But by the Orléanistes it was represented as a drunken orgy and used as a fresh pretext for stirring the people to insurrection.

The King and Queen, however, little suspecting these manœuvres, had left the scene happily. 'You see,' Louis XVI said to Marie Antoinette, 'that we are still loved.' Two days later when a deputation of the National Guard came to thank the Queen for the flags she had presented to them on September 30, she said, in replying to them: 'I was enchanted with Thursday [the day of the banquet]; the nation and the army must be attached to the King just as we are to them.' These words were repeated to the people as meaning that the Queen had expressed her delight at the insults offered to 'the nation' at the banquet of the bodyguard.

On the day Marie Antoinette received this deputation a glowing tribute was paid to Louis XVI by the Assembly which, in an address on 'national bankruptcy,' referred to his action in sending all his plate to the mint, as follows:

'Since the crisis in our finances patriotic gifts have increased in number. It is from the throne whose majesty a benevolent prince enhances by his virtues, that the finest example has emanated. Oh, you, so justly loved by your people! King, good man and good citizen! you have cast

your eye on the magnificence that surrounds you ; you have willed it and ostentatious metals have been turned into national resources, you have done away with objects of luxury, but your supreme dignity has received from this a fresh lustre, etc.' <sup>1</sup>

Can it be believed that these words were addressed to the King only two days before his palace was invaded by a revolutionary mob, whilst the Assembly sat quietly debating on the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and did not lift a finger in his defence?

In view of these assurances of loyalty both from the troops and the Assembly, the King and Queen felt no further alarm, and when the fateful 5th of October dawned, they had no conception that the threatened march on Versailles had at last materialized. The fact that the King went out shooting is therefore not as remarkable as it has usually been made to appear. Reassuring messages were brought him early in the morning, and the later couriers carrying the news that the march was beginning, were stopped by the mob on the road from Paris.

Just as the King was about to start, however, a message arrived from the Assembly asking him to sanction the first principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Louis XVI agreed to sanction the former, although he admitted they did not 'present indiscriminately to him the idea of perfection' and could only be judged on their completion. But he added: 'If however they will fulfil the wishes of my people, and assure the tranquillity of the kingdom, I accord, in conformity with your wishes, my consent to these articles, but on the express condition, from which I shall never depart, that in accordance with the result of your deliberations, the executive power shall reside wholly with the monarch (ait son entier effet entre les mains du monarque).' In these words Louis XVI simply stipulated that he should not be deprived of the power accorded to him by the Constitution itself, of which Article III ran: 'The

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, ii. 6.

supreme executive power resides with the King (réside dans les mains du roi).'<sup>1</sup>

As to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, Louis XVI admitted himself frankly puzzled, and well he might be. What indeed was one to make of Article III: 'Nature has made men free and equal in rights; social distinctions must therefore be founded on common utility'? Or Article IV: 'Men in order to be happy must have the free and entire exercise of all their physical and moral faculties'?

The King therefore replied that the Manifesto contained 'excellent maxims,' but could only be 'justly appreciated when its real meaning had been defined by the laws to which it must serve as the basis.'

This reply provoked an explosion of rage amongst the revolutionary elements in the Assembly which went on to discuss the criminal code.

The day was wet and windy, nevertheless the King set out for Meudon at ten o'clock with perfect tranquillity of mind. The young Comte de Semallé, who was with him on that occasion, relates, as evidence of the insubordination which had now become general, that a number of poachers were shooting at the game in all directions. But the King with undisturbed good humour turned to de Semallé, saying: 'Go and tell those men to move further on as they might injure someone in my suite.' The poachers received the order respectfully.

The rest of the royal family were equally untroubled. Madame Elisabeth remained peacefully at Montreuil, and Marie Antoinette, profiting by a momentary break in the rain, went out, escorted only by a footman, to spend the afternoon alone at the Petit Trianon.

Meanwhile the march on Versailles had begun. Between half-past three and four an advance guard of women reached the Château, and collected in a threatening group around the railings. 'Will posterity believe it?' says Montjoie, 'it was only then that the Comte de Saint-Priest wrote to the

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, i. 390, 503, 504.

King to tell him of the movement taking place.' Ferrières attributes this inertia of the Ministers to ineptitude on the part of some, to complicity on the part of others. The point should be borne in mind when reading the *Mémoires* of Saint-Priest who assigns to himself a heroic rôle on this day, and blames the King's weakness for the disasters that followed.

At the same time a messenger was dispatched to the Queen at Trianon.

Marie Antoinette, after visiting the *hameau*, was resting in a grotto half concealed in a ravine close to the Belvédère. The dreary autumn day was drawing to its close, all around yellow leaves were falling, forming a sodden carpet on the ground. Inside the grotto, illumined only by a shaft of light that shone through a crevice, the Queen sat on a seat of moss, listening to the sound of the rain and the stream trickling at her feet, and thinking sadly of the past. She thought of the happy summer days spent in the garden with her children playing around her on the lawns, she thought of her flowers, her animals, of the friends she had gathered round her, of the brilliant fêtes that had turned Trianon into a fairy scene with the sound of music and the scent of roses in the air. But now the garden was silent and empty, the flowers had withered, the friends had fled, two of her children had died in her arms, and she was alone—alone amidst a sea of enemies. Suddenly through the crevice in the rock she saw a page arriving with a note in his hand. It was the message from Saint-Priest summoning her back to the Château, telling her that an armed mob was marching from Paris on Versailles. Then she rose and, after taking a last look at her little kingdom that she was never to see again, she made her way back through the wind and rain, her feet stepping lightly as ever over the dead autumn leaves that strewed her path.

The King had not returned from shooting when she reached the Château, and the Ministers were sending for him desperately in all directions.

At last one of the King's equerries, the Marquis de Cubières, succeeded in finding him in the woods of Meudon, and gave him the note from Saint-Priest. The King opened it and turning to his gentlemen said: 'Monsieur de Saint-Priest writes that there has been a rising in the market, and that the women of Paris have come to ask me for bread. Alas!' he added with tears in his eyes, 'if I had any I should not wait for them to come and ask me for it. Let us go and talk to them.'

Then calling for his horse he put his foot in the stirrup when a bystander, M. de la Devèze, seeing his emotion, which he took for fear, threw himself on his knees, and cried: 'Sire, you are being deceived, I have just come from the École Militaire where I found only some women who said they had come to Versailles to ask for bread. I beg your Majesty not to be afraid.'

'Afraid, monsieur!' the King said with some warmth, 'I have never been afraid in my life!' and springing on to his horse he set forth at full gallop down a steep pathway through the wood and arrived at the Château just as the first detachment of women had collected round the railings. Such was his speed that he passed by them into the Cour des Ministres before they had time to stop him. Hardly had he set foot to the ground when the Comte de Luxembourg came up to ask him whether he had any orders to give to the bodyguard. The King replied laughing:

'Orders? Orders of war against women? You must be joking, M. de Luxembourg.'

M. de Narbonne-Fritzlär now begged the King to allow him some troops and cannon with which to guard the bridges, and the mob being turned aside in the direction of Meudon, to bombard them from the heights, afterwards pursuing them with cavalry so that not one would return alive to Paris.

But Louis XVI would not consent to this massacre. It must be remembered that he knew nothing about the real elements of which the procession was composed; Saint-



Priest had only told him that they were poor women asking for bread. To sweep them away with cannon fire would naturally have seemed to him brutal. Without any means of communication with Paris, since his couriers had been stopped on the road, without any sort of secret service that would have informed him of the plans of the conspirators, he could not guess that the supposed army of hungry women comprised 700 or 800 men drawn from the lowest rabble of Paris armed with scythes and pikes and muskets, *filles de joie* and their *souteneurs* from the Palais Royal, harridans of the Faubourgs clutching knives tied to broomsticks, and besides these a number of men in women's clothes, as at the time of the Guerre des Farines, masquerading as *poissardes*, amongst whom it was said afterwards several of the Orléaniste leaders—Laclos, Chamfort, Latouche, Sillery, the Duc d'Aiguillon<sup>1</sup>—were recognized. The few respectable working-women who had been torn from their labours and forced to join the march made up only a very small proportion of the army. The conspirators had cleverly made use of these to mask their designs, and keeping their armed forces at the rear of the procession advanced on Versailles behind a screen of petticoats.

Orders were now given to the troops to defend the entrance to the Château, and the King's bodyguard, the Régiment de Flandres, the chasseurs of the Trois Evêchés and detachments of the Garde Nationale of Versailles took up their positions on the Place d'Armes.

Louis XVI then summoned his council of eight Ministers at which opinions were divided on the measures to be taken. The Comte de Saint-Priest advised the King to send the Queen and royal family to Rambouillet and at the same time to defend the bridges of Sèvres, Saint-Cloud and Neuilly, finally to ride out himself at the head of his troops to meet the advancing army. The Maréchal de Beauvau,

<sup>1</sup> Son of the Duc d'Aiguillon who had been the Queen's enemy at the beginning of the reign (see *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette : before the Revolution*, pp. 22 and 64), and who died in 1780.

the Comtes de la Luzerne and de la Tour du Pin seconded the proposal. Necker and Montmorin, however, opposed it, saying that it would precipitate civil war, and persuaded the King to abandon the idea. Whether this counsel was as perfidious as royalists afterwards declared is an open question; Louis XVI had none of the instincts of a military leader and his appearance in this capacity might not have had the desired effect. As to defending the bridges, Mme de la Tour du Pin, daughter-in-law of the Minister of War, herself declares in her *Mémoires* that even before the return of the King to the Château it was too late to defend the Pont de Sèvres—the mob had already crossed it. The King's real mistake seems to have consisted less in not taking the leadership himself than in forbidding the troops to fire on the mob. So strict were his injunctions that no violence was to be used that as the troops were taking up their position on the Place d'Armes the King's bodyguard were heard to call out to the others: 'Gently, messieurs, be careful not to wound anybody!' <sup>1</sup>

But still, it must be remembered, the King imagined that it was only a question of dealing with women driven to revolt by hunger and their wretched appearance after the ten-mile march through the rain and mud was calculated to inspire pity rather than fear. Pale, and perished with cold, they looked, says an eye-witness, like corpses that had been dragged up from the bottom of the sea.<sup>2</sup>

This illusion of genuine distress was increased when Mounier arrived from the Assembly which had been invaded by the marchers at the head of a deputation of twelve women who came to ask the King for bread. Louis XVI was at this moment in the Salle du Conseil with his Ministers, but when the deputation was announced he went into his bedroom next door and Mounier with five of the women were introduced. The King received them with the greatest cordiality. Mounier, no less illusioned than the King as to the real object of the march, explained the terrible situation of Paris

<sup>1</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, ii. 178.

and begged Louis XVI to procure supplies if this was in his power. It was, of course, not in his power, since supplies were being deliberately held up; however, he replied feelingly, expressing his deep regret at the sufferings of the people. Then one of the women, Louison Chabry, a pretty flower-seller of seventeen from the Palais Royal, was put forward by her companions to ask the King for bread.

'You must know my heart,' answered Louis XVI. 'I will order all the bread in Versailles to be collected and given to you.'

At this, Louison was so much overcome that she fell fainting to the ground. Louis XVI ordered wine to be given her out of a great golden goblet: smelling salts were brought, Louison revived and throwing herself at the King's feet begged to be allowed to kiss his hand.

'She deserves better than that!' said Louis XVI, embracing her.

The women, enchanted with their visit, left the room crying 'Vive le Roi!' and narrowly escaped being hanged to a lamp-post by the crowd.

The pacific ending to the deputation seems in fact to have given the signal for hostilities. From that moment every effort was made to provoke the troops to make use of their arms in order to provide a pretext for attacking the Château.<sup>1</sup> The King, informed that this was the plan of the conspirators, ordered the Comte de Luxembourg not to use force, and although shots were fired by the mob and a few skirmishes took place, fresh orders were sent to the soldiers not to shoot, with the usual result that the agitators were encouraged to further violence.

Meanwhile, Mounier continued to importune the King for his unconditioned sanction to the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, declaring that nothing else would allay the tumult in the Assembly, and Louis XVI, whilst repeating that his sanction at this stage would be premature, ended by yielding to

<sup>1</sup> Bailly, iii. 93; Ferrières, i. 311.

Mounier's persuasions and appended his signature to the document. But to the crowds of women who had invaded the benches of the Assembly and who by now were really hungry, these philosophical maxims meant even less than they did to the King, and Mounier, returning triumphantly with the royal sanction, was met with renewed cries for bread.

Darkness had now fallen, and from the windows of the Château a red glare could be seen on the Place d'Armes where the marchers had bivouacked and were collected around huge fires at one of which they were cooking a horse of the bodyguard killed in the fray. Borne on the wind came that most terrifying sound, the deep murmur of an angry crowd, which rose and fell like the waves of a stormy sea, whilst from time to time gunshots rang out and savage howls froze the blood of those who listened.

At eleven o'clock news was brought that troops composed of the French Guards led by La Fayette and followed by an armed mob from the Faubourgs were advancing on Versailles with the object of bringing the King to Paris. Then the Comte de Saint-Priest urged Louis XVI to take refuge in flight, either to Normandy or only as far as Rambouillet. But the King, to whom this idea was hateful, continued to pace the room exclaiming: 'A fugitive king! A fugitive king!'

'Sire,' said the Comte de Saint-Priest, 'if you are taken to-morrow to Paris you will have lost your crown.'

Then the King consented to leave for Rambouillet. Six carriages were ordered; the Queen said to her ladies: 'Pack your things quickly; we are starting in half an hour.'

But here a terrible error of judgement was committed. Instead of arranging that the royal family should leave the Château on foot and join the carriages at a safe distance as they did before the flight to Varennes, the King's equerry, de Cubières—presumably acting on instructions from the Comte de Saint-Priest—ordered the carriages to come round to the gate of the Orangerie, which necessitated their crossing the Place d'Armes through the thick of the crowd, who

stopped four of them, calling out: 'The King is going off!' The first two, driven at a greater pace, succeeded in reaching the gate of the Orangerie, but this was found to be locked, and some of the insurgents seized them in the name of the nation and cut the traces.

The Comte de la Tour du Pin and the Comte de Saint-Priest then offered their carriages to the King, but Necker and Montmorin succeeded in persuading him to give up the idea of flight. Marie Antoinette, who seems on the contrary to have advocated it, yielded to the decision of Louis XVI and sent to her ladies saying: 'All is over; we are staying.'

By this time it was indeed probably too late. Mme de Tourzel observes that the royal family could easily have escaped earlier in the afternoon, for the horses had been harnessed to the Dauphin's carriage to take him for his usual drive, and the Queen with her children could have got into it, joined the King at Meudon and been driven away to safety. But no one thought of this; perhaps because the dangers of the situation were not yet apparent. By night-time the mob had become far more threatening and flight would have been attended by considerable danger. The Comte de Saint-Priest, who attributes the whole failure of the attempt to the King's indecision, was in reality more to blame than anyone for his delay in letting the King know that the marchers were arriving; the counsels he now gave were several hours too late.

Moreover, apart from the risks entailed, the King's flight at this crisis would have played directly into the hands of his enemies, and even if he had saved his life he would probably have lost his crown. For the conspirators were only waiting for him to fly in order to declare that he had abdicated and to proclaim the Duc d'Orléans king in his place. By standing his ground Louis XVI outwitted this design, and the Orléanistes now concentrated on their alternative plan of assassinating the Queen and bringing the King in chains to Paris.

It was nearly midnight when La Fayette at the head of his revolutionary army arrived at Versailles. The General, who had been forced against his will to lead it, with, he declared, a bayonet placed against his chest, was in despair at the sinister intentions expressed by his followers, and on reaching the end of the Avenue de Paris near the hall of the Assembly made a feeble attempt to restore discipline by ranging the Paris militia in order of battle and making them swear fidelity 'to the nation, the law and the King.' But, as Mounier observes, 'what sense was there in this oath at the moment when their presence at Versailles without the order of the King' was 'an infraction of all laws and an act of open rebellion against the authority of the monarch?'<sup>1</sup>

However, the farce completed, La Fayette entered the Assembly and assured Mounier of the law-abiding intentions of his followers, then going on to the Château he was admitted with several of his officers to the room where the King was sitting in council with the Comte de Provence, Necker, his commanding officers and others.

'Sire,' cried La Fayette, 'you see before you the most miserable of men. If I had believed I could be of more service to your Majesty by losing my head on the scaffold I should not be here, but I thought it better to come and die at the feet of your Majesty than to perish needlessly on the Place de Grève.'

To these faint-hearted heroics Louis XVI replied calmly: 'You need not doubt, M. de la Fayette, 'that it is always a pleasure to me to see you and my good Parisians. What is it they want?'

'The people are asking for bread and the Guards wish to resume their former posts around your Majesty.'

'Well, then, let them resume them.'

La Fayette descended to the courts and posted some of the Guards around the Château, whilst the rest were ordered to take up their position on the Place d'Armes.

<sup>1</sup> *Appel au Tribunal*, p. 165.

The inside defences of the Château were left to the body-guard. La Fayette then went to the Assembly to say that all was well.

Whilst these preparations were being made the women of the Court were racked with suspense, pacing silently up and down the long Galerie des Glaces, scene of all the splendours of the monarchy. The Queen remained in her great bedroom with Madame Elisabeth and the Comtesse de Provence, whilst the adjoining salon was filled with her ladies sitting on stools and tables and talking in hushed whispers.

Amidst the general agitation Marie Antoinette showed perfect tranquillity, her face was calm and showed not the slightest trace of anxiety, she reassured everyone around her, thought of everything and received a number of deputies from the Assembly whom she entertained with no sign of emotion. 'Everyone except the Queen,' one of these men said afterwards, 'was in consternation.'<sup>1</sup>

When about midnight Marie Antoinette proposed going to bed, the deputies begged to be allowed to remain with her until everything had quieted down. At this moment a note was brought to her; the Queen read it, then put it in her pocket and, turning to the men around her, said:

'No, messieurs, I do not wish you to stay with me, retire to rest, I demand it; to-morrow will prove to you that you had need of rest to-night.'

The note was from a Minister and contained these words: 'Madame, make your plans; to-morrow morning at six o'clock you will be murdered.'

But still Marie Antoinette showed no alarm. 'I know,' she said, 'that they have come from Paris to ask for my head, but I learnt from my mother not to fear death, and I shall await it with firmness.'<sup>2</sup>

Several of the Court councillors now begged her to

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 221; *Procédure du Châtelet*, evidence of witness CLXXVII, de Frondeville, conseiller du Roi.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 222; Le Maire, i. 400.

consider a plan of escape, telling her that indeed she would be murdered on the morrow, but she answered :

‘If the Parisians come here to assassinate me it shall be at the feet of my husband ; but I will not fly.’<sup>1</sup>

One of the deputies, the President de Frondeville, on behalf of several of her gentlemen, asked for permission to take horses from the royal stables to defend her in case she was attacked, but Marie Antoinette said :

‘I consent to giving you the order you ask for on one condition, that if the life of the King is in danger you should make use of it at once, but if I alone am in peril you will not use it.’<sup>2</sup>

The Queen was then urged to spend the night with the King, but knowing now that she was the intended victim, she refused firmly to risk his safety. Earlier in the evening she had instructed Mme de Tourzel to bring her children to her if any disturbances occurred during the night, but after the warning of her intended assassination had been brought to her, she ordered the Marquise to take them instead to the King, saying : ‘If any danger is incurred I would rather face it myself and keep it away from the person of the King and of my children.’<sup>3</sup>

La Fayette, however, assured the King that now he had unconditionally accepted the articles of the Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and had permitted the Gardes Françaises to take up their posts around the Château, everything would calm down, that the people were satisfied, and that the army from Paris would return thither at break of day. Besides this, he declared that the Château was well guarded and the fidelity of the Gardes Françaises absolutely to be relied on, so, he added : ‘I beg your Majesty to go to bed, to trust entirely to my care ; I answer for everything.’

Louis XVI, reassured by these promises, therefore went

<sup>1</sup> *Procès Criminel de Marie Antoinette* (1793), evidence of Comte d’Estaing,

p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Procédure du Châtelet*, evidence of de Frondeville, witness CLXXVII.

<sup>3</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, i. 12.



to bed at two o'clock, and Marie Antoinette, although she did not trust La Fayette, believing that he would not dare to risk his reputation as a general unless he was sure of his facts, retired at the same hour and slept peacefully till dawn.

La Fayette is said then to have gone the round of the Château inspecting the posts; if indeed he did this he cannot have carried out his inspection very thoroughly, as after events showed. However, having satisfied himself that all was well, he went to the house belonging to his family, the Hôtel de Noailles, and snatched two hours of sleep.

This slumber was afterwards bitterly reproached to La Fayette; 'he slept against his King,' said Rivarol in a phrase that became famous. The royalists nicknamed him General Morpheus. Louis XVI himself said to him drily on the following day: 'Had I foreseen that you would be obliged to sleep, I should have remained awake.'<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered, however, that he was really worn out with fatigue, and on arrival at the Château had been hardly able to drag himself up the staircase. As Mme de la Tour du Pin observes, the real crime of La Fayette was not so much this brief spell of sleep which he took fully dressed upon a sofa, as the fact that he ignored the Orléaniste conspiracy and treated the whole insurrection as a popular movement which he foolishly believed he was able to control.

For three hours all was quiet in the Château. Only a few faithful defenders of the royal family remained on guard. The Queen on going to bed had ordered her women to do the same. Mme Campan was not at the Château that night, but her sister, Mme Auguié, and the first waiting-woman, Mme Thibaut, who were in attendance, resolved not to obey this command. Going to the room where the rest of the Queen's women were collected, Mme Auguié said with tears: 'Can we go to bed when there are thirty thousand troops, ten thousand brigands and forty-two cannon in the town?' 'No, no,' the women answered, 'we cannot be guilty of doing what would be so wrong.' All

<sup>1</sup> Georgel, *Mémoires*, ii. 436.

decided therefore to sit up in their clothes throughout the night, whilst Mme Thibaut and Mme Auguié, taking their two maids with them, seated themselves on chairs against the door of the Queen's bedroom leading into the adjoining salon. This action saved the life of Marie Antoinette.

But whilst sleep reigned in the Château, outside, crime was wide awake. All through the night on the distant Place d'Armes the drums never ceased to beat, and their skins, sodden with the rain, gave out a hoarse note that added a weird horror to the sound. All night, too, the conspirators were on foot, handing out money, inciting the wretched instruments who were to carry out the massacres of the morrow.

At half-past five in the morning the Queen was awoken by a tumult under her windows looking out over the Orangerie. She rang the bell; Mme Thibaut entered.

'What is that noise?' asked the Queen.

Mme Thibaut answered that it was no doubt only some of the women marchers who had found nowhere to sleep and were wandering about on the terrace. Satisfied with this reply Marie Antoinette settled down again to rest.

In reality the tumult was caused by the first detachment of the mob that, in spite of La Fayette's supposed precautions, had been able to get past the guards and penetrate into the courts of the Château.

Half an hour passed. Then suddenly at six o'clock a fearful uproar arose on the marble staircase leading to the Queen's apartments, howls of rage followed by the clash of arms. Mme Thibaut rushed into the Queen's bedroom to wake her; Mme Auguié, dashing in the opposite direction, opened the door of the antechamber leading into the guard-room to find herself confronted by one of the bodyguard, Miomandre de Sainte-Marie who, with the blood streaming from his face, held his gun across the doorway, crying:

'Madame, save the Queen, they have come to kill her! I am here alone against two thousand tigers; my comrades have been forced to leave their hall.'

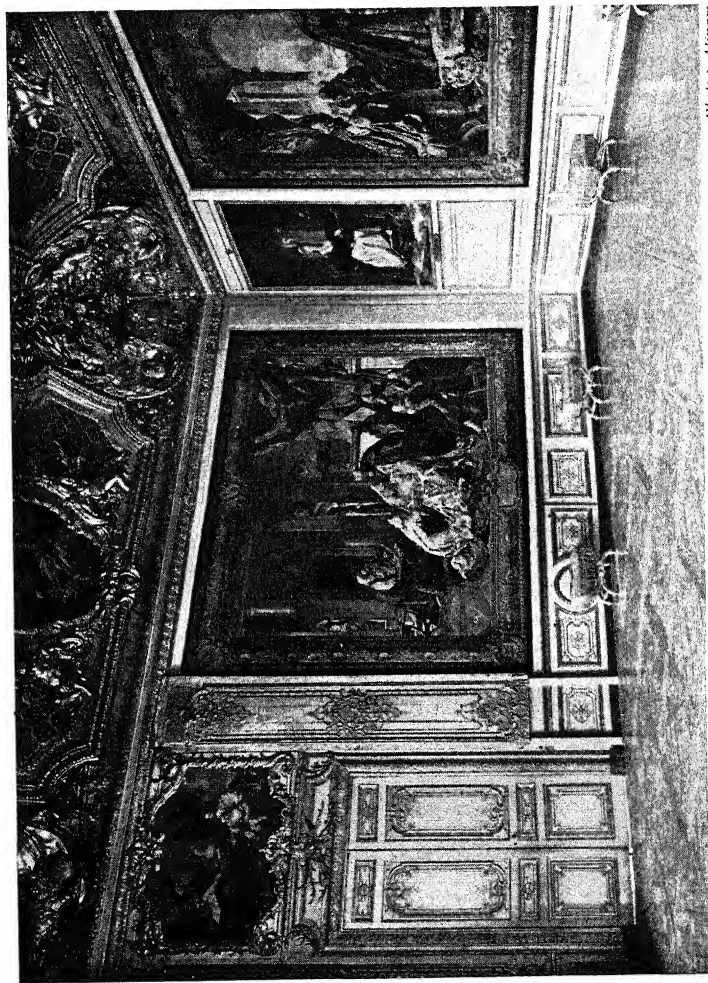
Tigers indeed they were, literally thirsting for blood, shrieking as they rushed up the staircase that they must have the heart of the Queen, that they must eat it and 'make cockades of her entrails.' Already de Varicourt, one of the bodyguard, had been murdered at the door of the guard-room and his head carried down to the courtyard to join that of his fellow guard, Deshutttes, who had been barbarously butchered by the mob. Durepaire was left alone to defend the door of the Queen's antechamber.

Mme Auguié, obliged to leave the unhappy Miomandre to his fate, closed the door on him, pushed the great bolt and, flying to the Queen's bedside, cried :

'Madame, get up, do not stop to dress, escape to the King's room!'

Marie Antoinette sprang out of bed, her women threw a petticoat over her head, not pausing to tie it, and thrust a wrap round her shoulders; the Queen, carrying her stockings in her hand, fled through the door beside her bed into the narrow passage leading through her little dressing-room of the *petits appartements* into the *Œil de Bœuf*. But on reaching the door, which was never locked except on her side, she found it had been locked against her. What hand had fastened it on this day of all others? For five agonizing minutes that must have seemed an eternity, she beat on the panels, and at last a young officer of the wardrobe in attendance on the King came hurriedly to open it and found the Queen half-clothed and almost fainting with terror on the threshold.

Meanwhile Louis XVI had been awakened at six o'clock by the tumult in the Cour de Marbre, and getting up, in the semi-darkness, went to the window of the Cabinet de la Pendule from which he could see the fearful crowd of brigands and sham *poissardes*, armed with every conceivable kind of bloodthirsty weapon, surging towards the door of the marble staircase leading to the Queen's apartments. Did he see the infamous Duc d'Orléans himself guiding the mob to the doorway, pointing the way up the great staircase,



*Photo : Alinari*

# THE BEDROOM OF MARIE ANTOINETTE AT VERSAILLES.

Under her portrait by Mme. Vigée Le Brun in the right hand corner is the door in the panelling opening into the Petits Appartements through which she escaped from the mob in the morning of October 6th.



telling them which way to turn, as other eye-witnesses declared afterwards? At any rate Louis XVI lost no time in watching and, seeing instantly the Queen's life was in danger, hurriedly threw on his dressing-gown and rushed to her room through a passage that ran beneath the *Œil de Bœuf* at the very moment that the Queen was flying for safety along the one overhead. In this way they missed each other, and the King arrived in the Queen's bedroom to find it occupied only by the guards, for the battle was still raging around the doors of the adjoining salon. Terrified for her fate, he asked where she was, and on being told the way she had taken, hurried after her, only a few moments before the mob burst into her room and, according to some accounts, finding her bed empty, thrust their pikes furiously into the mattress.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Queen had reached the King's bedroom, which she entered crying out: 'My friends, my dear friends, save me and my children!' and the King entering at that moment she fell fainting into his arms.

What were the men of the Court doing throughout these terrible scenes? Where were the Ministers who had warned her of the fate prepared for her, the deputies who had asked to defend her the night before, the officers and courtiers who might have been expected to form a phalanx in her doorway rather than leave her room to be defended by a handful of guards and a few defenceless women?

Well might Burke write: 'Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.' But in all this world of men one only was

<sup>1</sup> This point is a matter of dispute. Mme de Tourzel, who was in the Château at the time, Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 224, Ferrières, i. 324, Bailly, iii. 111, all declare the mob stabbed the Queen's bed; the Comte d'Hézécques, p. 312, and Mme Campan, who was not there, p. 252, say they did not. See note on this in P. de Nolhac, *Autour de la Reine*, p. 201.

found to rush to her side in the hour of peril, that man was Louis XVI.

The moment after the husband and wife had been united in the King's great bedroom, Mme de Tourzel entered with the Dauphin in her arms. Marie Antoinette, who had recovered consciousness, then went with the King to fetch Madame Royale and returned leading her, says Mme de Tourzel, 'with a firmness and dignity remarkable at such a moment.' Sitting in the embrasure of a window overlooking the Cour de Marbre, with her children and Madame Elisabeth, she set the example of cool courage to everyone around her. But when the little Dauphin, playing with his sister's hair, said plaintively: 'Maman, I am hungry!' Marie Antoinette's eyes filled with tears as she answered that he must be patient and wait until the tumult had ended. Only at one moment her sang-froid deserted her when she saw the Duc d'Orléans walking gaily arm-in-arm with Adrien Duport, and catching the Dauphin up in her arms she cried out uncontrollably: 'They are going to kill my son!'

The rest of the royal family had now collected in the King's bedroom, whilst Louis XVI joined his Ministers in the Salle du Conseil. The Comte de Provence made no attempt to stand by him. Not until half-past eight did Monsieur make an appearance, when he emerged from his apartment 'coiffé, powdered, dressed with his usual care and wearing his orders' with complete unconcern on his countenance; none of the brigands, it was noted, troubled about him at all, a circumstance which gave rise to strong suspicions of his fidelity.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile events were moving swiftly in the other parts of the Château. The mob, after leaving the Queen's apartments, had surged on to the Ciel de Bœuf, where the few remaining members of the bodyguard had entrenched themselves. Once the doors had been battered in and the guards massacred it would be an easy matter for the murderous horde to sweep on through the Ciel de Bœuf, the great

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Bouillé, *Souvenirs et Fragments*, i. 121.

bedchamber of Louis XIV, then the Council room, and finally back into the bedroom of Louis XVI to murder the whole royal family. But this plan was frustrated by La Fayette who, roused from his slumber by the news of the attack on the Château, had hurried to the scene, and summoning some of the old grenadiers of his Gardes Françaises, called on them to take their oath to defend the King and his bodyguard.

It was now seen that La Fayette had not miscalculated the loyalty of his men to the person of their commander, and the grenadiers, who had but yesterday marched against the King, were to-day, at a word from La Fayette, turned back to their former allegiance and ready to stand between the royal family and their assassins. Reaching the *Œil de Bœuf* they joined forces with the bodyguard and together drove the mob from the Château, then following up their victory the grenadiers descended to the Cour de Marbre to defend the lives of ten members of the bodyguard whom some of the still mutinous Gardes Françaises were preparing to butcher under the King's windows. Once more La Fayette came to the rescue. Throwing his hat on the ground and opening his coat he cried out that he would no longer command cannibals, and that if the Gardes Françaises wished to take the lives of these men they could take his as well.<sup>1</sup> This action had the effect of turning the whole tide; the next moment the shout went up from the crowd: 'The King! The King! we wish to see the King!'

Thereupon Louis XVI, rushing on to the balcony, called out for mercy to be shown to his faithful defenders. The crowd replied with cries of 'Vive le Roi! Vive la Nation!' The King was followed by the Queen holding her children by the hand; for a moment the cheers continued, the royal family then withdrew into the great bedroom of Louis XIV.

A few moments later another cry went up: 'The Queen! The Queen on the balcony!'

<sup>1</sup> Flammermont, *Correspondances Diplomatiques, Rapport du Comte de Salmour*, p. 267.



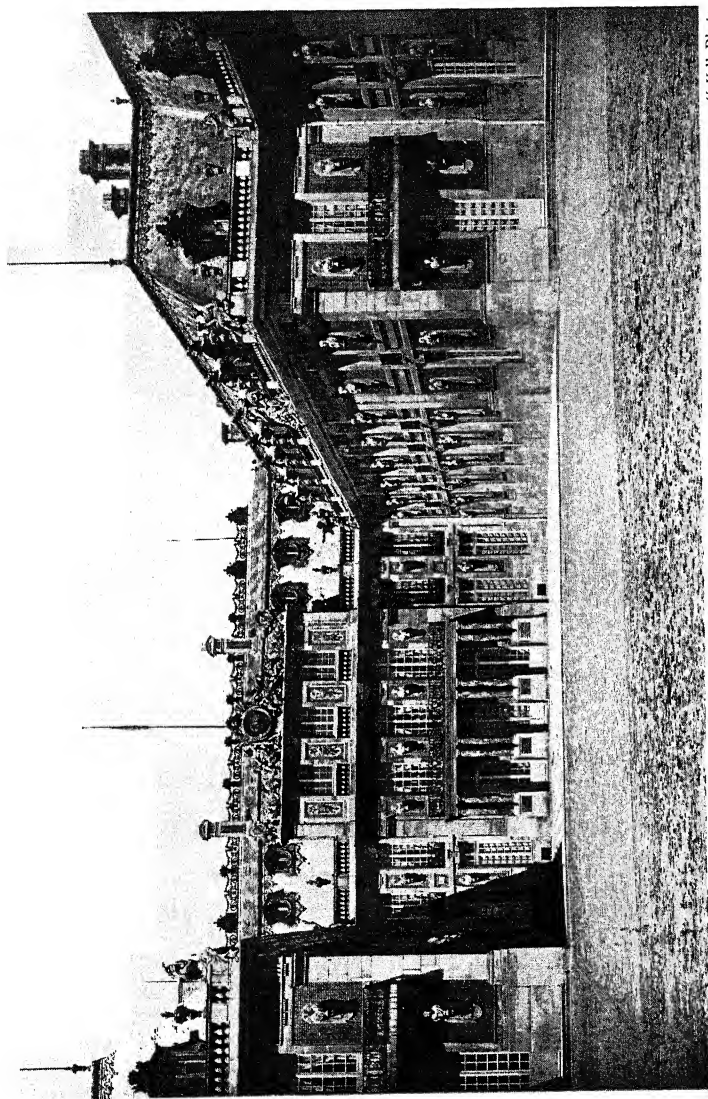
Marie Antoinette, again taking her children with her, appeared in the window, but now a menacing shout was heard: 'The Queen alone! No children!'

The sinister intention of these words was unmistakable, but Marie Antoinette did not hesitate. Gently pushing her children back into the room where Mme de Tourzel received them, she went out on to the balcony alone and faced the raging mob.

Standing there in the light of the bright autumn morning, pale, but dignified as ever, in the little yellow striped wrapper thrown over her nightdress, her beautiful hair disordered, her hands crossed on her breast and her eyes raised to Heaven as if in prayer, she cast so potent a spell over the assembled multitude that curses died on their lips, murderous weapons were lowered, only one man raised his musket to his shoulder and took aim at the Queen, but could not nerve himself to pull the trigger. At this supreme triumph of the spirit even that savage crowd was awed, and the hush that had held them for two minutes was broken at last by a few cries of 'Vive la Reine!' which grew into loud applause when La Fayette, carried away with admiration for the Queen's courage, stepped through the window, and bowing low over her hand, raised it to his lips.

So the strange power which protected the King and Queen each time they were brought face to face with the people had baffled the conspirators. The great plot had failed. The beast which lurked in the hearts of the Paris populace had been roused to fury, had been driven forward but had then refused to fall upon its prey. The royal family still lived. The alternative scheme was now put forward and a few voices, or according to Bertrand de Molleville, one voice only, cried: 'The King to Paris!'

Mme de Staël, an eye-witness of these scenes, says that Marie Antoinette, coming in from the balcony, went up to Mme Necker, Mme de Staël's mother, and said with stifled sobs: 'They are going to force us, the King and me, to go to Paris with the heads of our bodyguards carried in front of us on pikes.'



"X" Photo

### THE CHÂTEAU OF VERSAILLES

In the centre is the balcony on which Marie Antoinette stood facing the mob in the morning of October 6th.



They were, however, spared this added horror, the heads of the two murdered guards, Deshuttés and de Varicourt, were taken on ahead, two hours before the rest of the procession. Louis XVI had consulted with his Ministers, who arrived on the scene after the Château had been cleared of assailants, and ended by consenting to go to Paris, convinced that if he refused the Duc d'Orléans would be proclaimed King. So appearing again on the balcony he called out in a loud voice: 'My friends, I will go to Paris with my wife and children. I confide all that I hold most dear to the love of my good and faithful subjects.'

At this cheers broke out afresh.

The King then said: 'My bodyguards have been calumniated, their fidelity to me and to the nation must win them the esteem of my people.'

'Yes, yes!' the crowd replied. 'Vive le Roi! Vive les gardes du corps!'

La Fayette then led several men of the bodyguard on to the balcony and embraced them publicly amidst renewed applause. For the moment it seemed that peace had been restored.

But Marie Antoinette had no illusions. When La Fayette said to her: 'Madame, what are your personal intentions?' she answered: 'I know the fate that awaits me but my duty is to die at the feet of the King and in the arms of my children.'<sup>1</sup>

Shots were still being fired in the courtyards of the Château, and at one moment a bullet struck the wall close to the window where the Queen was seated. La Luzerne thereupon came and placed himself between her and the window, for her protection. Marie Antoinette however said: 'I see clearly what is your intention, M. de la Luzerne, and I thank you for it; but I do not wish you to remain there, it is not your place, it is mine,' and she made the Minister withdraw.<sup>2</sup>

All the while the cry of 'To Paris! To Paris!' could be

<sup>1</sup> Rochetier, ii. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, ii. 192.

heard outside. Saint-Priest relates that the King kept going out on to the balcony and then returning to throw himself into an armchair, seemingly stunned by the turn events had taken, and that the Queen said: 'Why did we not go off yesterday evening?' 'It was not my fault,' answered Saint-Priest. 'I know,' said the Queen.

Saint-Priest seems to have taken a malicious delight in impressing on the King the mistake he had made in refusing to follow his advice. 'Now,' he said, 'you will have to go to Paris and consider yourself a prisoner subject to the laws imposed on you.' It does not seem to have occurred to him that the position of the King would have been infinitely worse if he had been captured whilst attempting to escape instead of surrendering with a semblance of free-will to what was represented to him as the will of the people. The flight to Rambouillet was a measure of highly problematic wisdom.

The Queen, however, would have chosen it if the decision had rested with her, for even now she had not realized the full extent of the Orléaniste conspiracy, so had not the same reasons for remaining at Versailles which had determined Louis XVI to stand his ground. Besides, to her perhaps the usurpation of the throne seemed a matter of less moment than the safety of her husband and children. And in Paris she knew they would not be safe. Mme Campan, who had returned to the Château during the morning of October 6, relates that she and her father-in-law were alone with the Queen in her *petits appartements* the moment before the royal family started for Paris, that Marie Antoinette was in floods of tears and could hardly speak for the sobs that choked her, but, after embracing Mme Campan and giving her hand to M. Campan to kiss, she urged them both to come to Paris where they would be lodged in the Tuileries, adding: 'We are lost, dragged perhaps to our death, captive kings are very near to that.'

It was indeed as captives that the royal family were led to Paris. Without being given time to pack their things they

were now hurried from the glorious palace of the Roi Soleil, scene of so much former splendour, and, in a piteous group, descended the great marble staircase still stained with the blood of their bodyguards. Louis XVI, taking a last look at the Château and apparently anticipating a further invasion by the mob, said, as he mounted his carriage, to the Comte de la Tour du Pin, who was left behind as military governor: 'You are in charge here. Try to save my poor Versailles for me.'

But the Château, although left intact, had received that day its death-blow. Never again was it to hum with busy life, never again were travellers from foreign lands to look on wonderingly at the brilliant pageant of the Court, unrivalled by any other Court of Europe, as it passed through the great Galerie des Glaces or held its revels, in gleaming satin and brocades, with sparkling jewels and glittering swords, moving rhythmically to the sound of violins and flutes, illumined by a thousand candles. No more was it to be the birthplace of Kings, the cradle of 'the Children of France,' no more was the gay trampling of horses to be heard in its courtyards as the King went out to hunt or the Queen to drive abroad in her gilded carriage. All through the Château on this sad day of October 6 could be heard the closing of doors and shutters that had not turned on their hinges since the days of Louis XIV; soon all was emptiness and silence. The Château had closed its eyes upon the world, never to open them again. Henceforth it was to remain a corpse—a splendid corpse, in which the heart had ceased to beat for ever.

At one o'clock the tragic procession set out for Paris, headed by the Paris army and a mob of women. The first carriage contained the royal family—the King, the Queen, the Dauphin, Madame Royale, Madame Elisabeth, the Comte and Comtesse de Provence—and also the Marquise de Tourzel. Next came the Court, then the suite and the royal servants, and finally a hundred carriages with deputies of the Assembly. Behind the royal carriage walked the

shattered remnant of the bodyguard, disarmed, tattered and bloodstained, led as prisoners of war to Paris.

For the peace concluded by La Fayette proved only a momentary truce: stirred up afresh by the conspirators the mob reverted to its earlier frenzy. Eye-witnesses relate that the annals of savagery could hold nothing so horrible as this procession—the crowd all marching pell-mell, officers and brigands side by side, drunken women riding astride on cannons, and sham fishwives surrounding the royal carriage so closely that it seemed to be borne upon their shoulders, singing vile songs and insulting the Queen with their grimaces. By way of showing that the Court had hoarded stores of grain, the conspirators brought up wagon loads of corn to join the procession, around which the women marched shouting: ‘Nous vous amenons le boulanger, la boulangère et le petit mitron!’ (We are bringing you the baker, the baker’s wife and the baker’s boy.)

As the procession passed through Passy, the Duc d’Orléans himself was seen on the terrace of the hôtel of the Marquis de Boulainvilliers where the affair of the necklace had been planned, looking on with triumph at the humiliation of the royal family.

Throughout this terrible drive that lasted for no less than seven hours, the Queen, wearing a black cloak and no rouge, sat with perfect calm surveying the hideous scene and had so far recovered her composure as to be able to talk to the crowd surrounding the carriage: ‘The King,’ she said, ‘has never wished for anything but the happiness of his people. Many evil things have been said of us to you by those who wished to injure us. We love all the French and we glory in sharing the feelings of our good King.’ To which some of the marchers, touched by the Queen’s goodness, replied: ‘We did not know you, we have been very much deceived.’<sup>1</sup>

‘I saw this sinister procession, I was a witness of this heart-rending spectacle,’ Bertrand de Molleville wrote

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, i. 20.

afterwards. 'In the midst of this tumult, of clamour, of songs broken into by frequent discharges of musketry . . . I saw the Queen maintaining the most courageous tranquillity of mind, an inexpressible air of nobility and dignity and my eyes filled with tears of admiration and of pain.'

It was seven o'clock when the royal family arrived at the entrance to Paris and were received by Bailly, who presented the King with the keys of the city, saying: 'What a beautiful day is this when the Parisians are to possess your Majesty and his family in their town.'

The King answered with a sigh: 'I hope, monsieur, that my stay here will bring back peace, concord and submission to law.' He spoke with difficulty, for all were faint with hunger and fatigue. Throughout this terrible day the royal family had eaten nothing, and the little Dauphin during the drive to Paris had continued to cry out piteously for food. Nevertheless, shattered by the ghastly experiences of the morning and in the last stage of exhaustion, they were now dragged to the Hôtel de Ville to listen to long speeches. Bailly, who accompanied them, again spoke of this 'beautiful day'; the King replied that he came with joy and confidence into his good town of Paris.

Bailly, turning to the people, cried: 'The King orders me to tell you that he comes with joy into his good town of Paris!'

At this the Queen, raising her voice, said: 'You forget, monsieur, that the King said also "and with confidence."' '

'You hear that, messieurs?' said Bailly, 'you are more fortunate than if I had said it myself.'

At last the farcical exchange of compliments came to an end, and the royal family were driven through the streets amidst surging crowds of curious spectators. At ten o'clock they entered the Tuileries—their first prison.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRISONERS OF THE TUILERIES

THE great château by the Seine to which the royal family were brought as captives on October 6, 1789, was built in 1564 under Catherine de Médicis for her own use, but struck with superstitious forebodings she could not bring herself to live there. In fact, during the two hundred years of its existence it had never been inhabited continuously by the Kings of France; Louis XIV forsook it for Versailles in 1682, and Louis XV, after spending his minority there until 1722, moved, whilst still a boy of only twelve, to the château of the Roi Soleil. For some years after this the Tuileries remained empty and deserted, then it was turned into lodgings for hangers-on of the Court, people of all conditions who camped, more or less penuriously, in various parts of the Château whilst the State apartments fell into disrepair. Hot in summer and cold in winter, owing to the lack of sufficient fireplaces to warm it, it was quite unfit to be lived in all the year round.

Moreover, on the arrival of the royal family, nothing was ready for their reception. The crowd of lodgers, ordered to clear out at a moment's notice, had decamped, leaving their furniture behind them, but this did not nearly suffice for the needs of the Court and its vast retinue suddenly transported there *en masse* from Versailles, and the first night there were not even beds enough to go round.

The Dauphin, looking round at the bare rooms lit only by a few candles, with their worn and faded hangings, said sadly: 'Everything is very ugly here, Maman.'

'My son,' answered Marie Antoinette, 'Louis XIV lodged here and found it comfortable; we must not be more

particular than he was.' And as if apologizing to her ladies-in-waiting, she turned to them with a smile, saying: 'You see, I did not expect to come here.'

The Queen herself had a small apartment in the Château where she had been accustomed to spend the night after attending late entertainments in Paris, but the King had never stayed there before. One of the *grands appartements* was now prepared for him on the first floor, and a staircase hastily constructed to serve as a means of communication with the Queen's rooms below. Then *appartements* had to be found for Madame Elisabeth and the children, whilst the Comte and Comtesse de Provence went to take up their abode at the Palais du Luxembourg. Mme de Tourzel relates that she passed that first night sitting on a chair at the bedside of the Dauphin in a room open on all sides, with doors that would not shut, but which she succeeded in barricading with the scanty furniture it contained.

The awakening of the royal family next day was terrible. From early dawn a crowd had been collecting in the garden, and by nine o'clock a vast multitude surrounded the Château, clamouring to see the King. After the scenes of the day before this tumult had a sinister ring; the little Dauphin hearing it, threw himself into his mother's arms, crying out in terror: 'Good God, Maman, is to-day still yesterday?'

It soon appeared, however, that the people and, according to Mme Campan, some of the same women who had ridden to Versailles on cannons breathing threatenings and slaughter had now been restored to good humour.<sup>1</sup> Madame Elisabeth, taking her morning coffee at her window on the ground floor, was accosted by one of them who said: 'May one ask how the King has spent the night?'

'Very well, my children.'

'May we see him?'

'I will bring him to you.'

The Queen was not yet dressed, but after a while she appeared at the window with the King and the Dauphin,

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 256.

then bravos broke out so long and so loudly that for some moments the Queen could not make her voice heard.

'Send away all those courtiers who ruin kings,' cried one of the women. 'Love the inhabitants of your good town.'

'I loved them at Versailles,' answered Marie Antoinette, 'and I shall love them just the same in Paris.'

'Yes, yes,' said another, 'but on the 14th of July you wanted to besiege the town and have it bombarded.'

'You were told so and you believed it, that is what makes the misfortune of the people and of the best of kings.'

One of the women then spoke to the Queen in German. Marie Antoinette replied that she did not understand it. 'I have now become so French that I have forgotten my mother tongue.'

This was met with renewed cheers and hand-clapping. 'Vive la Reine!' cried the women, who then asked the Queen to make a pact with them and begged for ribbons and flowers from her hat as souvenirs. Marie Antoinette detached them herself and handed them to the women, who went on shouting for half an hour: 'Vive Marie Antoinette! Long live our good Queen!' <sup>1</sup>

The same day a deputation of *poissardes* arrived at the Tuileries to disassociate themselves from the horrors committed in their name by the sham *poissardes* who had marched on Versailles. These women presented a petition to the King and Queen 'demanding justice for the horrible calumny which made them accomplices of the violence committed the day before towards their Majesties.' <sup>2</sup>

All day long demonstrations continued in the gardens of the Tuileries. But good-humoured as the mood of the crowd might be now it was not to be depended on. At any moment their enthusiasm might vanish as quickly as their suspicions. This uncertainty made the position of the royal family terrible; from one day to another they never knew

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 257; *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Rivarol* (1824), p. 263; Buchez et Roux, iii. 137. See my *French Revolution*, p. 161.

which way the wind would blow. Besides, there was no blinking the fact that they were prisoners, kept at the Tuileries under supervision of La Fayette and his National Guards. The acclamations of the populace might be demonstrations of loyalty; they were still more evidence of curiosity and displays of power. In a word, the royal family were 'on show,' obliged at any moment of the day to come forward at the beck and call of the people, to appear at their windows and parley with the crowd. When Louis XVI walked in the garden voices cried derisively: 'The King has been let out!' <sup>1</sup> Some of the women even climbed into the room of Madame Elisabeth and she was obliged to move to an upper floor.

Throughout this time Marie Antoinette was magnificent, and now that the aunts, who had been left at Bellevue, could no longer prejudice her mind, Madame Elisabeth could better appreciate the sterling qualities of her sister-in-law. 'It is impossible,' she wrote to Mme de Bombelles on October 13, 'to show more grace and courage than the Queen has done during the last week.' <sup>2</sup>

Another woman who showed surprising courage at this moment was the Princesse de Lamballe. During the march on Versailles she was staying peacefully with her father-in-law, the Duc de Penthièvre, at his Château d'Eu when, on October 7, a messenger came riding in hot haste bringing the news of what happened at Versailles. Then this princess, whose tendency to 'nerves' evoked the derision of Mme de Genlis, rose instantly, saying: 'What horrible events! I must go at once!' and setting off through rain and darkness she reached the Tuileries in the night of October 8 and took up her post again as *surintendante* to the Queen. <sup>3</sup>

According to Montjoie, it was then that Marie Antoinette gave a portrait of herself to the Princesse de Lamballe,

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Imbert de St.-Amand, *Marie Antoinette aux Tuileries*, p. 6.

which showed that although she was still only thirty-four, her hair had already begun to turn white. Underneath she had written the words: 'Les malheurs l'ont blanchie.' The Comte d'Esterhazy relates that in the summer of 1786, at the time of the Affair of the Necklace, she had already many white hairs. But it seems that she never went entirely white, for during her last days at the Conciergerie the maid Rosalie relates that her hair was still fair and only white on the temples, which, the Queen herself told her, was the effect of the 6th of October.

It was not only her friends who rallied to Marie Antoinette at this moment. Mme du Barry, the 'creature' she had once despised, now came forward to offer a splendid proof of devotion and of gratitude for the kindness the Queen had ended by showing her. After the 6th of October she had taken in and nursed some of the injured members of the bodyguard at Louveciennes, and the Queen having sent to thank her, she answered the message, saying:

'These young wounded have no other regrets than of not having died for a princess as worthy of all homage as your Majesty. What I am doing for these brave men is far less than they deserve. I console them and I respect their wounds when I reflect, Madame, that but for their devotion, your Majesty would perhaps not be alive! Luciennes is yours, Madame, was it not your benevolence that gave it back to me? Everything I possess comes from the royal family, I am too grateful ever to forget this. The late King, with a sort of presentiment, forced me to accept many valuable things before sending me away. I had the honour of offering you these treasures at the time of the Assemblée des Notables; I offer you them again, Madame, with eagerness. You have so many expenses to meet and such innumerable benefits to bestow! Allow me, I beg you, to give back unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's.'<sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette, touched to the heart, refused, however, to accept the sacrifice.

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 180.

Her conduct during the October days had excited universal admiration, and deputation after deputation came to the Tuileries to offer their respects. On October 20 it was the National Assembly, which had moved up to Paris the day before, and now continued its sittings provisionally in the hall of the Archevêché, whilst the Manège, or riding school of the Tuileries, was being prepared for them. The Queen received the deputies in the evening after they had paid their homage to the King in the most ardent language, and taking the Dauphin in her arms presented him to them amid shouts of 'Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine! Vive Monsieur le Dauphin!'

On November 16 the Académie came to pay its tribute and a speech was delivered by its director, the Chevalier de Boufflers, who said: 'Madame, if I dared to portray to your Majesty the picture of a person worthy of the homage of the universe, on whom Heaven had seemed to shed beforehand the brilliance of a diadem, who had combined more than human dignity with a grace almost divine . . . the delicacy of whose sex . . . seemed to have served as a veil to the courage of a hero . . . I should not need to name the model.'<sup>1</sup>

Besides receiving deputations at the Château from all classes of people, the King and Queen went about Paris, visiting manufactories, institutions, hospitals, with the same concern for the people's welfare that they had displayed in the heyday of their popularity. Neither the insults they had endured, the hideous dangers through which they had passed, nor the threats of a fresh invasion of their palace, this time the Tuileries, availed to wear out their patience or disturb their serenity.

Marie Antoinette, who continued to prepare the Dauphin for the position she believed he was to occupy, took him one day to a Home for lost children, where she said to him: 'My son, you are here in an asylum for poor orphans abandoned by their parents. Never forget what you have

<sup>1</sup> De Falloux, p. 143.

seen, and extend your protection one day to these unfortunate beings.' <sup>1</sup>

These injunctions were not wasted on the Dauphin, who came to take a great interest in the Home and loved to visit it. On leaving, he would say to his mother as they got into the carriage: 'Maman, Maman, when shall we come back again?'

At the same time he made a secret resolve. His aunt, Madame Elisabeth, had given him a charming little casket in which he now took to depositing most of his pocket money. The King, seeing him counting out écus and piling them carefully inside the box, said: 'What, Charles, you are hoarding like a miser!'

At this epithet the little boy blushed with vexation, but recovering his good humour, let out his secret. 'Yes, mon père, I am a miser, but it is for the poor lost children. Ah! if you only saw them . . . they are really to be pitied!' Louis XVI, taking his son in his arms, kissed him heartily, saying: 'In that case, my child, I will help you to fill your coffer.' <sup>2</sup>

The King and Queen went together to visit a glass factory in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, where Marie Antoinette received such a rapturous welcome that she exclaimed: 'How good the people are when one seeks them out!' 'They are not quite so good,' a courtier observed drily, 'when they come to seek one.' 'Oh,' the Queen answered quickly, 'but then it is because they are led by outside influences.' <sup>3</sup>

It was this conviction that the people themselves were not to blame which supported the King and Queen throughout their trials and prevented the least word of impatience from them. Up to the last day of his life Louis XVI continued to think the people had been misled and could hardly believe that Paris—his 'good town of Paris' that he had entered so

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Beauchesne, *Louis XVII*, i. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 230.

often amidst acclamations—would not rise as one man and tear him from the hands of his assassins.

Up to a point no doubt he was right. Left to themselves the true people would have retained their loyalty, for no King since Henri IV had won their affection to the extent that Louis XVI had done in the early days of his reign, and to the end the feelings of the great mass of the people remained unchanged. But although the succeeding outbreaks of the Revolution were the work of agitators and not the outcome of popular effervescence, there was nevertheless a section of the people who lent themselves readily to violence. But for this the Revolution in its later stages would have been no more possible in Paris than in London. For in the underworld of Paris there has always lurked a tiger thirsting for human blood. The march on Versailles had whetted the appetite of the beast; no gentle methods could tame it, only the crack of the trainer's whip could send it back crouching to its den. Unhappily Louis XVI was not the man to employ such methods even if he had had the force at his disposal, and his great humanity only emboldened it to further onslaughts. The tiger had tasted the blood of the bodyguard and now it craved for more.

It was not that the beast was hungry. From the day the royal family were brought to Paris the scarcity of bread had miraculously ceased. On October 11 the Duc d'Orléans, challenged by La Fayette for his complicity in the march on Versailles, had been sent by Louis XVI to England under the pretext of a diplomatic mission, and according to Montjoie, had really abandoned his manœuvres for holding up supplies. But although the Duc himself appears to have been struck by remorse, his followers knew no relenting. When the Assembly moved up to the capital on October 19 the provisioning of the city was placed under the control of Bailly and La Fayette, who were able to stop the speculations in grain. The Orléanistes, enraged at this check to their manœuvres, ordered the bakers under pain of death not to make the requisite quantity of bread, and by this means



succeeded in creating a momentary shortage. One baker named François, who disregarded these threats and worked all the night of October 20 to provide the necessary supply for the morrow, paid for his devotion with his life. Falsely accused of selling loaves under the weight ordained by the new regulations, he was seized by the mob and hanged to the same lantern from which Foulon had been suspended three months earlier. Then his head on a pike was carried to his young wife who was expecting a child.<sup>1</sup>

Gouverneur Morris, the American Minister in Paris, describing this horrible incident, goes on to say: 'Paris is perhaps as wicked a spot as exists. Incest, murder, bestiality, fraud, rapine, oppression, baseness, cruelty; and yet this is the city which has stepped forward in the sacred cause of *liberty*. The pressure of incumbent despotism removed, every bad passion exerts its peculiar energy.'<sup>2</sup>

The instigators of revolution found it, in the words of Burke, 'their interest to keep the same savage dispositions alive.' In order to inflame the minds of the people against the monarchy and the clergy, a play entitled *Charles IX*, luridly portraying the massacre of Saint Barthélemy, was put on the stage at the Théâtre Français. This plan of holding up some unworthy royal personage to execration or ridicule at public spectacles has been a favourite device of revolutionaries up to the present day. Was it, asks Burke, 'intended to make the Parisians abhor persecution and loathe the effusion of blood? No, it was to teach them to persecute their own pastors . . . it was to stimulate their cannibal appetites. . . . Such is the effect of the perversion of history by those who, for the same nefarious purposes, have perverted every other part of learning.'<sup>3</sup>

The spirit of cruelty had spread even amongst the peasants. After the laws protecting the game had been done away with by the abolition of the *droits de chasse* (rights of the chase)

<sup>1</sup> Beaulieu, ii. 219; Le Maire, ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Gouverneur Morris, i. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Nelson), p. 357.

on August 4, 1789, Gouverneur Morris found the peasants hunting partridges with clubs, chasing the poor creatures until they dropped from fatigue.<sup>1</sup> 'The whole peasantry of France,' says the contemporary Playfair, 'turned itself loose upon the birds and beasts. . . . The people had risen in a mass for the first time upon the timid race of animals, which were exterminated in a few months.'<sup>2</sup>

The King had put down his own sport after the Assembly had declared that anyone might kill the game he was in the act of following; but with strange inconsequence the Assembly then urged him not to do so, to which the King replied that at such a time as this the chase held no attractions for him; he begged them, however, to restore order in the woods and forests where frightful brigandage was taking place.

On December 11, 1790, Lord Robert Fitzgerald, writing to the Duke of Leeds, describes 'the dreadful havoc' committed in the woods round Paris by the people carrying off the timber as they pleased:

'The Bois de Boulogne which is close to this town has likewise been sadly dismantled, and last week two of the royal gamekeepers who endeavoured to oppose the plunderers in carrying away the finest trees were killed on the spot.'<sup>3</sup>

Such was the state of France now that the royal authority had been annihilated. Concessions had led merely to chaos, and though all grievances had been removed the Revolution continued with unabated vigour. Yet whilst depriving the King of every vestige of power the Assembly themselves paid an astounding tribute to him at this moment. On January 5, 1790, they presented him with an address asking him to increase his personal expenditure, in the following words:

'Sire, the National Assembly has deputed us to request your Majesty to be good enough to fix yourself the portion of public revenues which the nation wishes to devote to the

<sup>1</sup> Gouverneur Morris, i. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Jacobinism* (1795), p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Archives of Record Office, F.O. 27, f<sup>o</sup> 34. (Not published in *Dispatches from Paris*.)

maintenance of your household, to that of your august family and to your personal enjoyments. But in asking your Majesty for this mark of goodness, the National Assembly has not been able to repress a feeling of anxiety to which your virtues have given birth. We are aware, Sire, of that severe economy which finds its source in your love for the people and in the fear of adding to their needs. . . . You have sought your happiness in that of your people; permit them in their turn to place their first enjoyments in those they come to offer you. But if by our desires we cannot overcome the touching severity of your way of living, deign at least to accord to the dignity of your crown the pomp and splendour which, in adding to the majesty of the law, becomes a means of happiness to your people. . . . Thus it is for the happiness of your people that we come to counteract those simple tastes and patriarchal manners which have won you their love and which show the nations the most virtuous of men in the person of the best of kings.'

To this Louis XVI replied that he was much touched by the address of the Assembly, but that he would not take advantage of their confidence and would wait to express his wishes on this point until arrangements had been made for the payment of State debts, the expenses of public order and the defence of the kingdom. 'What concerns me personally,' he said, 'is, in the present circumstances, my least anxiety.'<sup>1</sup>

How in the face of this evidence is it possible to maintain that the extravagance of the Court or of the Queen was a cause of the Revolution? If in reality Marie Antoinette had contributed to the deficit, is it likely that the King would have been urged to spend more on his household and family? If the Assembly had entertained the least belief in the absurd charge brought against her of sending large sums to her brother the Emperor, would they have put more money in her way at this juncture?

Joseph II could not imagine what could have given rise

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, iii. 52.

to this accusation. Writing to his brother Leopold on October 8, 1789, he said: 'I have been as much afflicted as you by all the horrors they spread against the Queen of France, but what can be done with insolent madmen? They cannot get away from the idea that my sister has secretly sent me millions, whilst I do not know why or how I should have asked for them or how she could have got them to me; I have never seen a sou from France!' <sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette felt these calumnies deeply. The Comte de Ségur, who returned to Paris at the end of 1789 after some years' absence in Russia, describes his emotion on seeing again the Queen whom he had left 'so happy, so brilliant, so loved and surrounded by reverence,' and on hearing from her lips this story of money sent to Austria, the calumnies circulated about her at the time of the Affair of the Necklace, the way in which she had been falsely represented as influencing the King against reforms. She spoke of the Ministers who had been appointed in deference to the wishes of the public and of the outcry that was then raised against them as soon as their plans were put into practice.

'You know,' she said, 'the goodness of the King, his want of confidence in himself and his one and only passion, the happiness of France!'

But he had had everyone against him—the Parlements, the noblesse, the clergy, the Notables, what could he have done? Always without rancour the Queen spoke of those nobles who, like La Fayette and de Ségur himself, had sided with the popular party and helped to undermine the royal authority; La Fayette had come to the rescue at Versailles, would he not now defend the honour and the safety of the King? Pathetically she asked:

'What do you think of such a dreadful state of things? Do you believe it is possible for us to get out of it?'

'Never,' says Ségur, 'did I see more dignity in sorrow, more gentleness in affliction.'

Yet all the advice he could find to give was that the King

<sup>1</sup> Chevalier d'Arneth, *Joseph II und Leopold von Toscana* (1872), ii. p. 278.

should accept the Revolution, since the only way to check disorders was to oppose them by 'a wise and lawful liberty'—in other words, that Louis XVI should continue further along the path of surrender that had already proved so fatal.<sup>1</sup>

Met by such counsels as these is it surprising that the King and Queen failed to act with resolution? On one hand, Saint-Priest urged resistance to the Revolution, but lent himself to every hare-brained scheme of the counter-revolutionaries which could only land the royal family in disaster<sup>2</sup>; on the other, Necker, who still acted as the King's principal adviser, continued to advocate the same policy of concessions as de Ségur. Not one wise and strong man was found to stand beside them at this crisis.

It was thus that Louis XVI, yielding to the persuasions of Necker, went to the Assembly on February 4, 1790, and put himself at the head of the Revolution. In an eloquent speech, beautifully spoken, he emphasized the necessity for establishing the new order with calmness and tranquillity, he urged the Assembly to concentrate on the good of the people and to restore public confidence. Whilst approving the institution of a single Chamber he said that nothing could rob an honoured race—the old noblesse—of the distinctions they had won in the service of their country, nor the ministers of religion of the respect due to them. Then he went on to say: 'I will therefore defend the constitutional liberty of which the general desire, in accordance with my own, has consecrated the principles. I will do more; and in agreement with the Queen who shares all my sentiments, I will early prepare the mind and heart of my son for the new order of things which circumstances have brought about. I will accustom him from his earliest youth to find his happiness in the happiness of the French and always to recognize, in spite of the tongue of flattery, that a wise constitution will preserve him from the dangers of inexperience, and that a just liberty adds a greater value to the sentiments of love and

<sup>1</sup> Comte de Ségur, *Mémoires*, ii. 205-208.

<sup>2</sup> Ferrières, ii. 79.

fidelity of which the nation, throughout so many centuries, has given such touching proofs to its Kings.'

Then after urging the Assembly to maintain order and to show Europe that the French people, renowned for their wit and genius, also understood justice, Louis XVI made this touching appeal to the better feelings of the Assembly :

'Just as calm seemed to be returning, by what fatality are new alarms spread through the provinces? By what fatality do they give themselves up to fresh excesses? Join with me to stop them and let us use all our efforts to prevent criminal violence from staining these days when the happiness of the nation is being prepared. You who have so many means for influencing public opinion, enlighten on their true interests the people that are being misled, that good people which are so dear to me and by whom they assure me I am loved when they would console me for my griefs.' <sup>1</sup>

These last words, spoken with inexpressible charm by Louis XVI in his fine sonorous voice, whilst the tears flowed from his eyes, went so to the hearts of the Assembly that they too broke out into weeping, and for some moments the emotion was such that the King could not proceed.<sup>2</sup>

For more than a month afterwards this sentence 'ce bon peuple qui m'est si cher et dont on m'assure que je suis aimé quand on veut me consoler de mes peines' was passed from mouth to mouth, all Paris repeated it, all the newspapers and pamphlets reproduced it; in the provinces they proposed to erect a column on which it should be engraved in letters of gold.<sup>3</sup>

The King was escorted back to the Château in triumph by a deputation from the Assembly, and the Queen with her children came forward to meet them with a little speech in which she said :

'I share, messieurs, all the sentiments of the King and I join in heart and spirit with the step which his love of his

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, iii. 299.

<sup>2</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, p. 39; Montjoie, *Conjuration d'Orléans*, iii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Montjoie, *Conjuration d'Orléans*, iii. 38.

people has led him to take. Here is my son, I shall tell him ceaselessly of the virtues of the best of fathers, I shall teach him early to cherish public liberty and I trust that he will be its strongest support.'<sup>1</sup>

That evening Paris was illuminated; a *Te Deum* was sung at Notre-Dame; all again seemed peace and joy, the King and Queen both appeared to have recovered their former popularity.

But only a fortnight later the Queen found herself in a fresh predicament. On December 24, 1789, a hot-headed royalist, the Marquis de Favras, had been arrested by order of the Comité des Recherches of the Assembly, for an alleged plot against the Revolution and led before the Châtelet, where he was accused of planning to march on Paris with twelve thousand Swiss and twelve thousand German troops to rescue the King and murder Bailly and La Fayette. Although, as Favras maintained before the tribunal, this story was untrue, it seems probable that some plan had been concerted between him and the Comte de Provence, who now basely deserted him. Presenting himself before the Commune of Paris on December 26, he disavowed all connection with Favras and went on to say that ever since the Assembly of Notables he had never ceased to believe that a great revolution was ripe, and that whilst the royal authority was the rampart of national liberty, national liberty was the basis of the royal authority.<sup>2</sup> This was the Prince who dared to accuse Louis XVI of weakness. But the greatest perfidy was shown by the Comte de Saint-Priest, who gave evidence against Favras, saying that in the preceding month of August Favras had approached him in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles and said: 'I pity his Majesty and the royal family with all my heart and I would willingly sacrifice myself for the maintenance of the privileges of the noblesse and clergy.' Consequently Favras proposed to march on the Assembly with 1200 men. Saint-Priest asserted that he

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, i. 37; Le Maire, ii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, ii. 276; Hézécques, p. 55.

had refused to have anything to do with this project.<sup>1</sup> Foolish as it may have been, Saint-Priest, who professed to be an ardent royalist and who perpetually blamed the King for giving in to the Revolution, was hardly the man to condemn a scheme of this kind, but, anxious to save his own skin, he did not scruple to betray a fellow-royalist. Favras continued to the last to deny his guilt, and indeed no proofs of a definite conspiracy were brought against him. But the people were out for blood, and on February 19, 1796, Favras was hanged on an unusually high gibbet in the Place de Grève. His last words on the scaffold were: 'Fellow-citizens, I die innocent; pray to God for me.' The executioner, touched to tears, had to be ordered by the victim himself to perform his task.<sup>2</sup>

The heroism displayed by Favras in his last moments made a deep impression on Paris. By a deplorable error of judgement his widow and young son were brought to the Tuileries during dinner, which the King and Queen still took in public, and Marie Antoinette, cut to the heart at the plight of the tragic pair, victims of Favras' passionate devotion to the royal family, was obliged to sit cold and impassive, as if oblivious to their grief. Surrounded by National Guards, with their commander Santerre the brewer, a leading Orléaniste agitator, behind her chair, she could show no sympathy to the unhappy little boy standing before her. 'I did not even dare to lift my eyes to him,' she said with tears afterwards to Mme Campan. 'The royalists will blame me for not having appeared to think about this poor child; the revolutionaries will be angered by the thought that it was supposed I should be pleased at his being presented to me.' All the Queen could do was to send money secretly to Favras' widow with assurances that she would not forget her and her son.

Only a few days after this incident Marie Antoinette was plunged in grief by the news that her brother, the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, ii. 416.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Conjuration d'Orléans*, ii. 389.



Joseph II, had died on February 20, in Vienna. So her best friend amongst the rulers of Europe was gone; his brother Leopold II, who succeeded him, had played no part in her life and was to give her little support in the future.

Never had Marie Antoinette been so lonely; Louis XVI, led on from one concession to another, seemed to have lost all power of resistance; Madame Elisabeth on the other hand displayed a bold and manly spirit of counter-revolution. The King's action in putting himself at the head of the Revolution, she writes to Mme de Bombelles, 'in my view removes what little crown he had left on his head.' The execution of Favras filled her with righteous indignation. 'There was not the least proof that he ever wished to assassinate MM. La Fayette and Bailly. But it was necessary to frighten those who wished to serve the King, the people wanted blood and the blood of a man to whom they could give the name of aristocrat.'<sup>1</sup>

Between these two extremes Marie Antoinette steered a middle course, never expressing in her letters any animosity towards the Revolution, yet grieving more than Madame Elisabeth over the terrible position in which the royal family were placed. Anything, she wrote on October 10, 1789, 'is preferable to the horrors of civil war,' and on the 23rd: 'The only way to get out of this is patience, time and the confidence we must inspire.' Again: 'Our position is frightful, we must discover how to get out of it not by violent methods—they would all fail, for we are not the strongest—but by a continuity and constancy of ideas and conduct that will foil all evil designs.' 'My rôle,' she says, 'is to shut myself up absolutely in my rooms and to try, by complete inaction, to make them forget all about me.' Sometimes there is a ray of hope: 'The good bourgeois and the good people are for us.'<sup>2</sup>

But now and then comes a *cri de cœur*: 'You speak of my courage' (during the October days), she writes to the

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 148-154.

Duchesse de Polignac on December 29, 'I assure you that there was much less need for it in the frightful moments I passed through than to endure our position, daily and continually. One's own troubles, those of one's friends and of all who surround one are a burden too heavy to bear, and if my heart did not hold by such strong ties to my children, to you and to two friends I have, I should often wish to succumb. But you all support me. I owe this feeling to your friendship, but I bring you all bad luck, and your grief is for me and caused by me.' Then she goes on to speak of her children :

'You must have received the letter from my daughter. The poor little thing is always marvellous with me. Truly, if I could be happy it would be through these two little beings. The "Chou d'Amour" [the Dauphin] is charming and I love him madly. He loves me too in his way, without ceremony. I like to call him that to remind him of you and yours. Sometimes I ask him if he remembers you, if he loves you; he says "Yes," then I caress him still more. He is well and growing strong and does not get into tempers. He takes walks every day which do him a great deal of good.'<sup>1</sup>

The Dauphin, who was now four years old, made himself quite happy at the Tuileries; he had his little garden near the river where he could dig and grow flowers, though on a smaller scale than at Trianon. 'I am very sorry not to have my garden at Versailles any longer,' he said one day to Mme de Tourzel, 'for I would have made two beautiful bouquets, one for Maman, one for my sister.' The Parisians often collected to watch him at work, and then, if the crowd was too great for them all to come near him, he would hand them flowers over the railing, saying politely: 'Excuse me, I am very sorry that my garden is so small because that deprives me of the pleasure of receiving you all.'

One day the officers of the Régiment de Flandres came to pay a visit to the royal family, and the Dauphin begged to be allowed to see them.

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 157.

'But you would not know what to say to these gentlemen,' said the Queen.

'Do not trouble, Maman, I should have no difficulty.'

And as soon as the officers entered, he said to those in the front row: 'I am charmed, messieurs, to see you, but very sorry that I am too small to see you all.' Then turning to one of the tallest, he added: 'Monsieur, hold me in your arms so that I can see all these gentlemen!' Raised to this height he said with a charming smile: 'I am very glad, messieurs, to be in the midst of you all.'

At first he had missed the bodyguard he had known at Versailles and said to Mme de Tourzel: 'I can see well that there are wicked people who cause pain to Papa and I regret our good bodyguards whom I liked much better than these guards here. I do not care for them at all.'

But it was explained to him that he must be nice to the National Guards and not speak before them of his wish to have the bodyguard back, to which he replied: 'You are right,' and from that moment maintained a discreet silence on the subject.

Marie Antoinette found great consolation in the Dauphin's gay and charming nature; at the same time her sufferings did not escape his notice. One day when some of his mother's waiting-women were talking in his presence about a girl who, they said, 'must be as happy as a queen,' the Dauphin said with tears in his eyes: 'It is certainly not of Maman you are speaking when you use that expression.' One of the maids ventured to ask why, then the Dauphin, looking round him carefully to make sure that no strangers were listening, said with a deep sigh: 'No, I tell you Maman cannot be happy for she is always weeping.' It was only in this way the women found out that the Queen who showed them every day a serene and smiling countenance, shed bitter tears when alone with her children.

The Dauphin was an extremely pretty child. A contemporary says that he combined in his face the handsome features of Louis XV, the kindliness of Louis XVI and the

dazzling complexion of his mother.<sup>1</sup> His sister, though fresh and pleasing, seems to have had none of his charm, and although countless anecdotes are related of the Dauphin—always so quick to react to every situation—hardly a word or saying of Madame Royale's has been recorded. Her own Journal, published later, provides a singularly unemotional record of the tragic events through which she passed, and it is sad to think that the least interesting member of the whole family imprisoned at the Temple was the only one destined to survive.

Marie Antoinette, though devoted to her daughter, thought her inclined to pride and '*dissipation*'—the same failing attributed to herself as a child by Maria Theresa!—and her warmest affections centred in her little son. In the hour of danger her first thought was always for the Dauphin.

During the winter of 1789-90 an invasion of the Château was constantly threatened, and by the spring the danger of a repetition of the 6th of October seemed imminent. La Fayette, who had returned to his rôle of 'Facing-both-Ways,' displayed little energy in repressing disorders, and although he had the whole forces of the capital at his disposal, he contented himself with warning the King that a particularly violent attack on the Tuileries had been planned for the 13th of April. 'If the intentions of the sedition-mongers become alarming,' he said to Louis XVI, 'I will warn the Château by a cannon shot fired from the Pont Neuf.' What the unfortunate royal family were to do on hearing this signal does not appear to have entered into La Fayette's calculations. However, nothing more serious occurred during the night of the 13th than a few gunshots fired on the terrace of the Château, but the King, taking this sound for the warning arranged with La Fayette, hurried to the Queen's apartments. Not finding her there he sought her in the Dauphin's room and found her holding the little boy to her heart. 'Madame,' he said, 'I have been looking for you, and you caused me great anxiety.'

<sup>1</sup> Weber, ii. 293.

'Monsieur,' Marie Antoinette answered quietly, 'I was at my post.'<sup>1</sup>

In view of these constant alarms, plans for flight were incessantly put before the royal family. One of the first was proposed by Augeard, a private secretary of the Queen's who, recognizing that she was the most in danger, suggested getting her away in a post-chaise with her children to the frontier. Marie Antoinette gave the plan her consideration, but ended by saying: 'After thinking it over, I will not go; my duty is to die at the feet of the King.'<sup>2</sup>

An attempt was then made by the Comte d'Inisdal, a deputy of the noblesse, to persuade the King to escape with his family. Louis XVI, however, could not bring himself to agree to this proposal. One evening, Mme Campan relates, d'Inisdal came to the Tuileries and told her that all was ready, relays of carriages had been provided, the National Guards surrounding the Château had been won over, the King must fly that night.

Louis XVI at the moment was playing whist with the Queen and the Comte and Comtesse de Provence. Mme Campan as a waiting-woman had not the right of entry, but her father-in-law, Monsieur Campan, ventured to go in and give the royal family d'Inisdal's message. No one answered a word. Then the Queen, turning to the King, said: 'Monsieur, do you hear what Campan has just said?'

'Yes, I heard,' Louis XVI replied, and went on with the game.

The Comte de Provence, by way of being witty, said, quoting the line of a comedy: 'Monsieur Campan, please repeat that pretty couplet.'

But Marie Antoinette persisted: 'Still, you must really say something to Campan!'

Then the King said: 'Tell M. d'Inisdal that I cannot consent to being taken away.'

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Rocheterie, ii. 118.

‘You understand?’ the Queen added emphatically to Campan, ‘the King cannot consent to being taken away.’

The decision was probably a wise one, for d’Inisdal later went over to the King’s enemies, so was not to be relied on.

Marie Antoinette, whilst submitting absolutely to the King’s will, longed, however, to be rescued from their terrible position; ‘we shall have to fly,’ she said to Mme Campan a little later, ‘the danger increases day by day.’

It was thus that finding no support in the King, who seemed resolved to face any fate with resignation, the Queen was thrown back henceforth on her own resources. When one remembers her natural distaste for public affairs and her essentially feminine outlook on life, first as a light-hearted girl, then as a gay and pleasure-seeking woman, after that as a devoted mother, it is extraordinary to find her settling down with masculine energy to grapple with the problems that beset her and all those around her. So she entered on that fourth phase of her troubled existence—as a politician.

## CHAPTER V

### MIRABEAU

IN judging the conduct of Louis XVI throughout the Revolution it is necessary to realize the causes that led up to the want of resolution he displayed at times of crisis. In the early days of his reign he had not shown himself consistently weak; indeed on several occasions, notably throughout the *Guerre des Farines*, he acted with a courage and resolution surprising in so young a man. What had brought about this change in his character? How is it that at thirty-six he displayed less strength of will than at nineteen?

M. A. Geffroy, in his book, *Gustave III et la Cour de France*, raised the question of the change in the mentality of Louis XVI when deploring the fact that his early letters preserved in the Archives of Paris, particularly those written to Vergennes, had never been published. 'Nothing,' observes M. Geffroy, 'would be more interesting than to follow in these unknown documents the patient, scrupulous and accurate work of this head of the State who desires to carry out his task worthily. . . . We recognize . . . this well-intentioned sovereign with his honest soul, his correct and upright mind, who, in less troubled times, on a stage less vast, would have made an excellent king.' And M. Geffroy goes on to compare the letters written during the first half of his reign—'clear, intelligent, very dignified'—with those 'that emanated from the same pen during the years of struggle' which were confused and undecided.<sup>1</sup> Thus, whilst the mental powers of Marie Antoinette increased under the stress of the Revolution, those of Louis XVI

<sup>1</sup> *Gustave III*, vol. ii. pp. 346-348.

declined for reasons that have never been properly appreciated.

The first cause was no doubt a physical one. It must be remembered that he was not leading a normal life. For a young man accustomed to violent exercise out of doors, to hunting and shooting in the forests round Versailles, the confinement of the Tuileries was intolerable; he seldom rode, and then no further afield than the Bois de Boulogne, whilst the only exercise he took daily was a short walk to the Dauphin's little garden at the end of the terrace. Inevitably his liver and his nerves must have suffered. Inevitably too he put on flesh—the tendency of all his family. It is surely unnecessary, however, in referring to this point to borrow the language of the revolutionary mobs and the gutter press of his day which designated him as 'le gros Louis'; this cheap way of striking an effect is unworthy of any serious historian. If muscular corpulence is to be a matter for ridicule, hundreds of great men could be made to appear ridiculous. Cæsar regarded it as a ground of confidence:

'Let me have men about me that are fat :  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights :  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look . . .'

If for Cassius we substitute Carrier, the eternal type of lean and rat-like revolutionary, we have a perfect contrast between Louis XVI and the men who were to succeed him in power.

Moreover, it will be noticed that when, as an exception to the general rule, a revolutionary happens to be fat, he is not made to appear ridiculous on that account. Both Mirabeau and Danton were fat, yet the writers who refer to 'fat Louis' never speak of 'fat Mirabeau' or 'poor fat Danton'; no, when it is a case of a demagogue, the fat man becomes 'a Titan,' a powerful and heroic figure to be admired, not derided.

In reality Louis XVI, a man of iron muscle and tremendously powerful physique, was, far more than Danton,



entitled to be described as a Titan. The Comte d'Hézécques, comparing him at the age of thirty-two with his brother, the Comte de Provence, says: 'Monsieur was very fat, but he had none of that *embonpoint* which denotes strength and vigour like that of Louis XVI. . . . His temperament was unhealthy. . . .'

It was not until deprived of all vent for his muscular energy and forced to lead a sedentary life that the robust health of Louis XVI began to fail.

Added to these physical conditions was the prolonged mental strain he had endured for years. Ever since the first month of his reign he had been faced with problems of an insuperable kind, crisis after crisis had arisen, and whichever way he turned he met with opposition from one quarter or another. The *Guerre des Farines*, the struggle with the Parlements, the disorder in the finances, the American War, the Affair of the Necklace, the campaign of calumny against the Queen and, above all, the incapacity of his Ministers—all these had caused him ceaseless trouble and anxiety even before the Revolution had begun.

In our day, politicians saddled with far less responsibility find it necessary to take long holidays and to spend week-ends regularly in resting from affairs of State. But Louis XVI, during the fifteen years of his reign up till 1789, had never taken a holiday; the few days' visit to Cherbourg in 1786 was the only occasion when he had been able to get away from the problems which harassed him perpetually. Often throughout this period he had passed through moments of the same profound discouragement which had impelled him to say to Malesherbes in 1776: 'You are more fortunate than I am; you can abdicate!' Thus whilst still at Versailles the burden of reigning had crushed his spirit, for, as Arthur Young observed, it was evident that nothing he could do would please the people to whom every step he took was misrepresented by his enemies.

The feeling that he was not understood by his people, says a contemporary, deeply grieved the soul of the King. One

day, driving in the environs of Versailles, he noticed a labourer toiling wearily in his field with the sweat streaming from his weather-beaten face. Louis XVI, getting down from his carriage, watched the man for a few moments, then turning to the Comte de Vaudreuil at his side, he said :

‘Comte de Vaudreuil, I envy that man!’

‘What? The King can envy that poor fellow worn out with fatigue?’

‘Yes, in truth, I envy him. This evening when he returns to his poor home he will be understood by his children and by those who live with him . . . whilst I, Comte de Vaudreuil, am never understood. And, see you, not to be understood, to be misjudged by those one loves, by those one longs to make happy, that is a hard burden to bear. Yes, in truth, I would rather do the work of that man.’

As he said these words ‘the noble countenance of the King took on an expression of great sadness’; his eyes filled with tears. Then pressing a few gold pieces into the hand of the labourer he went his way.<sup>1</sup>

Now, by 1790, the strain had become intolerable; the stoutest heart would have lost its vigour after all he had gone through. At work in his study at the Tuileries or pacing the confines of the palace garden he strove vainly to decide what policy to follow; it was impossible to find a way out of the maze. In his perplexity he would pore over the history of Charles I as recounted by Hume, trying to discover where that ill-fated monarch had gone wrong and what course should be pursued in order to avoid the same disasters. So far, Louis XVI could feel he had laid himself open to none of the charges brought against his seventeenth-century predecessor. Charles had resisted the Petition of Rights demanding that taxation should only be levied by Parliament; Louis had readily consented to renounce his right to levy taxes without the consent of the National Assembly. Charles had dissolved Parliament and reigned for eleven years without one; Louis, after intimating at the Séance

<sup>1</sup> Walsh, *Journées Mémorables*, i. 46.

Royale of June 23, 1789, that he intended to close down the Assembly and rule by himself, allowed the Assembly not only to continue but to usurp the reins of power. Charles had endeavoured to recover his authority; Louis made no attempt to retain his. Finally, Charles had raised the standard of civil war, and Louis had determined that not a drop of French blood should be shed in his cause. By all the laws of analogy it seemed then that Louis XVI had avoided every action that could serve as a pretext for regicide or even for revolution. It was doubtless this conviction which largely contributed to his policy of surrender.

But what Louis XVI failed to realize was the difference in the character of the two nations with which he and Charles I had to deal. The handsome and spirited Stuart would have appealed to the romantic minds of the French people and won the homage they always paid to valour even in the person of an autocrat. In the position of Louis XVI Charles would not have yielded to unreasonable demands or allowed any love for the people to blind him to the necessity for maintaining his authority, and if rebellion had resulted he would have put it down with all the forces at his command. He would not have hesitated to call the royalists to arms, and placing himself at their head would speedily have swept the demagogues from their seats. Fervently monarchic at heart, the French only needed to be given a lead in order to rally round the throne and make a La Vendée of all France. On the other hand the humane and kindly Bourbon could not have failed to win the hearts of the English. His common-sense would have gained their confidence, his homely appearance would only have endeared him to them. In the place of Charles I, Louis XVI would have granted immediately the reforms demanded by the nation and Cromwell with all his Ironsides would have been unable to find a *cause de guerre* in order to establish their supremacy. For it was only by civil war that a military despotism could be imposed on the nation and the hideous crime of January 30, 1649, accomplished. The British sense of fair play would

have made it impossible for Republicans, however determined, to overthrow by civil commotion a King who had refused to take up arms in his own defence and whose sole thought was to make his people happy. Instead of a scaffold a statue would have been erected to him in Whitehall by his subjects as a reformer only comparable to Alfred the Great. If only Louis XVI had been King of England and Charles I had been King of France there would probably have been no revolution in either country. The misfortune of Louis XVI was to reign over a nation totally incapable of appreciating his virtues.

As the result of pondering over these questions and vainly seeking a way out of the predicament in which he found himself, Louis XVI fell into a state of deep discouragement which was to culminate later in what we know to-day as 'nervous breakdown.' It was thus that he became really incapable of making decisions and, having set his feet on the slippery path of concessions, allowed himself to be led from one to another, hoping each time that this would be the last and that peace would be finally restored.

The summer of 1790 brought some relief to the King's state of mind and body, for the royal family were allowed to spend some months at Saint-Cloud, and set off there on June 5 amidst cries of 'Bon voyage au bon Papa!' from the crowds assembled around the Château.

It was whilst at Saint-Cloud that a new and unexpected defender presented himself before the King and Queen—Mirabeau. In order to understand what led up to this meeting we must go back to October 1789.

Directly after the march on Versailles the great demagogue had abandoned the cause of the Duc d'Orléans, whom he had served from interest rather than from inclination. Always a monarchist by conviction, he would doubtless have retained his allegiance to Louis XVI but for the treatment he had received at the hands of the King's Ministers, Montmorin and Necker, whose contemptuous attitude threw him into the arms of the Duc d'Orléans. But the Duc's pusillanimity

in disappointing his supporters after the 6th of October on one hand, and the Queen's courage on the other, changed his outlook. At the beginning of 1789 he had said that to count on Orléans would be 'like building on mud,'<sup>1</sup> and when a letter from the Duc de Biron was brought to him saying the Duc d'Orléans was leaving for England, Mirabeau handed it to one of his companions, saying: 'Look at this—he is as cowardly as a lackey—a *jean foutre* who does not deserve all the trouble we have taken on his behalf!' <sup>2</sup>

Even before this he had made an overture to the Court. The day after the King was brought to Paris, that is to say on October 7, he went early in the morning to his friend the Comte Auguste de la Marck and told him he must persuade Louis XVI that he and the royal family were lost if they did not get out of Paris. The only way to save the situation and the Constitution itself was to put the King in a position to coalesce with his people. According to La Marck he proposed that the King should go to Normandy, which was populated by a race more tenacious than the rest of the French and where it would be easy to join forces with Brittany and Anjou; to retire to Metz or any other frontier town would be to declare war on the nation and abdicate. He advised that the King should leave Paris openly in broad daylight for Rouen and before starting should issue a proclamation saying that he was not free in Paris, that he now threw himself into the arms of the people but that at the same time he stood by those decrees of the Assembly which he had sanctioned and asked the nation to reconsider those he did not approve, etc.

La Marck, impressed by Mirabeau's plan, wondered how he could get it to the King. He dared not go himself to the Tuileries knowing the Queen's dislike of Mirabeau, and he therefore adopted the futile course of taking it to the Comte de Provence and asking him to try and persuade the Queen

<sup>1</sup> Marmontel, iv. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Docteur La Fisse, witness IV at Procédure du Châtelet and admitted by Mirabeau. Mounier, *Appel au Tribunal*, p. 318. *Moniteur*, vi. 32.

to put it before the King. After reading the memoir with attention the Comte de Provence said it would be no use to apply to the Queen because she had little power over the King, as her inability to influence him over the choice of Ministers in the past had shown. As to the King himself, he went on to say, his 'weakness and indecision are beyond words. In order to give you an idea of his character, imagine oiled billiard balls that you might try in vain to keep together.'<sup>1</sup>

This famous simile has frequently been quoted as a true description of Louis XVI, but coming from the Comte de Provence the accusation of weakness and irresolution was nothing short of grotesque. What powers of resolution had this flabbily fat and plethoric being displayed during the course of his career? What help or advice had he ever given to his brother in the perplexed state of the monarchy? Far from bringing strength to his support he had chosen the easy path of popularity for himself; he had seconded the King's and Queen's misguided decision on the double representation of the Tiers État; during the October days he had played no part whatever, allowing himself to be brought to Paris like a dummy without uttering a word; he had contributed to the death of Favras and paid an abject tribute to the Revolution when disowning him. Moreover, whilst Louis XVI's weakness was occasioned by his excessive love for the people, the weakness of the Comte de Provence arose from the selfish desire to ensure his own safety by ingratiating himself with the Assembly; thus he had all the irresolution of his brother without his virtues and benevolence.

Moreover, as the enemy of the Queen, the Comte de Provence was the last person to interest himself in Mirabeau's scheme for extricating her and the King from their present predicament. Little, therefore, resulted from his interview with La Marck and the whole matter remained in abeyance throughout the winter.

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 90.

Mirabeau, however, continued to think out further projects for re-establishing the royal authority and breaking the power of the Assembly. In his opinion civil war was now the only hope. Some months earlier, during a conversation with his Swiss friend, Étienne Dumont, to whom he confided his ideas in the strictest secrecy, he had expressed the conviction that the whole of France was still attached to the King and that the nation was essentially monarchic. 'The moment the King is free,' he said, 'the Assembly will be reduced to nothing. There will be a few disturbances in the Palais Royal. If La Fayette wants to play the Washington and place himself at the head of the National Guards, La Fayette will deserve death and his fate will soon be decided.'

Dumont observed that this would lead to massacres and went on to say: 'I do not know what are your means for carrying it out, but I am sure they are radically wrong because the King has not the character to uphold them, he will make this plan fail like all the others.'

Then Mirabeau answered: 'You do not know the Queen, she has a prodigious strength of mind; she is a man for courage.'

'Have you seen her?' asked Dumont quickly.<sup>1</sup>

No, Mirabeau had not seen her and La Marck's interview with the Comte de Provence failed to gain him the interview on which his mind was set. This became his dominating thought—to meet the Queen face to face, to atone for his past by throwing himself at her feet and constituting himself her champion. His motive, however, was not purely chivalrous. Mirabeau despised Necker and hoped, if his plan succeeded, to become the King's Minister in the place of the Swiss banker. But this time his principles coincided with his ambitions; he genuinely preferred Louis XVI to the Duc d'Orléans and his admiration for Marie Antoinette was sincere.

Marie Antoinette, however, detested Mirabeau. It was

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs d'Étienne Dumont*, p. 147.

not merely that he had seemed to threaten her life when on the 5th of October in the Assembly he had demanded that the person of the King *alone* should remain inviolable, but that his moral character repelled her. In the preceding September, when La Marck had spoken to her of conciliating him, she had answered: 'I do not think we shall ever be so unfortunate as to be reduced to the painful extremity of having recourse to Mirabeau.'<sup>1</sup>

But now that extremity had come. In March 1790 La Marck had gone to Belgium, but was recalled to Paris by an urgent letter from the Comte de Mercy who, on his arrival there, told him that the King and Queen had heard of his relations with Mirabeau and would like to know what opinion he had formed of him. La Marck, who could not, or would not, believe in Mirabeau's criminal intrigues with the Duc d'Orléans, assured Mercy that Mirabeau had been misjudged and now wished to serve Louis XVI. Mercy replied that the King and Queen were prepared to accept his services; La Marck said that in that case Mercy must have an interview with Mirabeau himself. After some weeks' hesitation Mercy finally agreed that Mirabeau should meet him at the house of La Marck.

At that time La Marck was living at the old Hôtel of the Ducs de Charost, now the British Embassy in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré, which has one entrance from the street and another from the garden opening into the Champs Élysées. On the appointed day in April Mercy arrived in his carriage through the main entrance in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré whilst Mirabeau entered on foot through the garden gate. It was on this famous occasion that Mirabeau definitely offered his services to the Court and impressed on Mercy the necessity for getting the King out of Paris. The next step was to arrange an interview between Mirabeau and the Queen.

Marie Antoinette, however, recoiled from the idea. On April 22, whilst the aforesaid negotiations were in progress,

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 78.



she wrote to the Baron de Flachslanden saying that she realized the situation must be turned to account, but who was to act as intermediary with Mirabeau? Where was a man to be found, wise, prudent and adroit enough to parley with a being 'whose whole existence is nothing but deceit, cunning and lies'? And she went on to say:

'I am bewildered with thinking it out. If you know anyone suitable to undertake this I beg you to tell me. I will make up my mind to see anyone you wish, provided it is not Mirabeau himself. It is not that I do not think my personality as a woman would give me more skill and force than anyone else to answer him; but the horror his immorality inspires in me, together with the personal reasons I have always had for hating him, and the prudence with which I must behave—all this prevents me from seeing him. . . . See then, monsieur le baron, if you can find someone we can employ to capture or destroy the monster. . . . Burn my letter, I beg you. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

In the end it was La Marck himself who acted as the go-between. Mercy arranged that he should see Marie Antoinette at the Tuileries and, the better to ensure secrecy, the interview took place in the room of Mme Thibaut, the first waiting-woman of the Queen, who was absolutely to be trusted.

On opening the conversation Marie Antoinette frankly admitted her distrust of Mirabeau, and referred to the sinister part he was said to have played on the 5th and 6th of October. La Marck, of course, denied the truth of these accusations which the damning evidence brought before the Châtelet had not yet come to confirm. After a while the King entered and said brusquely:

'The Queen will have told you I wish to employ the Comte de Mirabeau if you think he will be useful.'

La Marck assured the King that he would. Louis XVI then went on to say that all negotiations with Mirabeau must be kept a secret from his Ministers, including Necker,

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 165.

a proposal that La Marck says astounded him, although he himself goes on to observe that Mirabeau's advice and actions could not fail to be in direct opposition to those of Necker. Obviously, then, the only way was to make sure of Mirabeau before alienating Necker and, having done so, to form a new Ministry composed of men with whom Mirabeau could work. This was the opinion of both the King and Queen, and in forming it they showed greater perspicacity than La Marck. To let Necker know of the negotiations going on with his rival to power at this juncture would, of course, have ruined everything.

La Marck then had an interview with Mirabeau, who was overjoyed at the idea of being employed by the Court. He was now indeed *plus royaliste que le roi* for, whilst Louis XVI never thought of regaining his former absolute power, Mirabeau was less resigned to his losing it. As an Orléaniste he had stood up for the royal authority when defending the 'absolute veto'; as a supporter of Louis XVI and, still more, of Marie Antoinette, he maintained the same policy. It was thus that in his first memoir for the Court, dated June 1, 1790, he wrote:

'I professed monarchic principles when I saw in the Court nothing but weakness, and when, not knowing the soul or the thoughts of the daughter of Maria Theresa, I could not count on this august auxiliary. I fought for the rights of the throne when I inspired only distrust. . . . What shall I do now that confidence has raised my courage and gratitude has made duties of my principles?'<sup>1</sup>

La Marck then went to the Tuileries again and talked for two hours with Marie Antoinette, who, on this occasion, seemed to have recovered something of her old gaiety and who led the conversation on to indifferent topics far removed from the business La Marck had come to discuss. This power of turning her attention from the grave questions of the hour to the light matters that make up the lives of women in society, was characteristic of Marie Antoinette. The

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 326.

moment there was a ray of hope her sanguine temperament made her forget her troubles and she became again the charming and care-free châtelaine of the Petit Trianon. La Marck, listening to her lively talk, realized the absurdity of attributing to this woman the desire to interfere in public affairs; the rôle of politician had been forced on her by circumstances, and she gladly turned from affairs of State to subjects of more feminine interest. So, La Marck wrote afterwards: 'As soon as I spoke of the Revolution she became sad and serious, but directly the conversation turned on other subjects, I found her again in her amiable and gracious humour. This trait depicts her character better than anything I could say.'

La Marck relates that after this conversation with the Queen he went out sadly because it was evident to him that neither she nor the King realized the dangers that threatened them, and that they were both too kind and confiding by nature to imagine the horrors of which they were to be the victims.

Marie Antoinette now asked Mercy what the King ought to do for Mirabeau; Mercy replied that the first thing was to pay his debts. Always in want of money, Mirabeau in the past had been financed by everyone in turn—by 'the Jews, the Court of Spain, the stockjobbers, commercial companies and the Court itself,' says Weber, for Montmorin had been obliged to bribe him not to publish his *Histoire Secrète de la Cour de Berlin*. Latterly it could not be doubted that he had been paid by the Duc d'Orléans; Mirabeau never gave his services for nothing. And now he was to be paid by Louis XVI. This is what Lord Acton calls 'a great scheme of corruption.'<sup>1</sup> But why was it 'corrupt' to pay this man for returning to his allegiance to his King and to the principles in which he had believed all along? The scheme now elaborated by Mercy and La Marck was one for counteracting the corruption to which he had been subjected by the Orléanistes. As La Marck observed,

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the French Revolution*, p. 251.

Mirabeau was now only paid to hold his own opinion.<sup>1</sup> Loaded with debts, it was clearly impossible for him to give his mind to the great plan he had devised for saving the monarchy. It was therefore finally decided that the King should pay his debts and allow him 6000 livres (£262, 10s.) a month; at the same time Louis XVI gave La Marck a million livres (£43,750) in notes, which were to be given to Mirabeau at the end of the sitting of the National Assembly if he had carried out his promises.

Mirabeau then launched out into great expenses. Leaving his furnished lodgings, he took a house in the Chaussée d'Antin which he furnished luxuriously, engaged a *valet de chambre*, a chef, a coachman, bought horses, books, bibelots, even jewels, and entertained lavishly. However, in the service of the King he displayed prodigious activity, making speeches in the Assembly or working in his study, writing out memoirs for the Court, correcting, revising, dictating to his secretary and so on.

But still, by the end of June 1790 he had not yet met the Queen face to face. This last incentive was needed to bring his ardour to concert pitch.

At last, however, yielding to the persuasions of Mercy, Marie Antoinette determined to overcome her aversion to the idea of seeing him. It must be remembered that Mirabeau was physically repulsive with his bulky misshapen body, his monstrous head surmounted by its mane of hair, his hideous pitted countenance—‘like a lion which has had smallpox,’ says Mercier—but apart from the repugnance his outer man inspired, the thought of his evil life and the memory of the October days when he was said to have urged on the horde of brigands coming to assassinate her, filled the Queen with horror. However, in the end, she consented to receive him at Saint-Cloud. It was therefore arranged that the interview with Mirabeau should take place there on July 3. In order to cover his movements Mirabeau set forth the day before for Auteuil, where his niece, Mme

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 325.

d'Aragon, was living, and after spending the night with her, he started off early the following morning in a two-horse chaise driven by his nephew, the Comte du Saillant, disguised as a postillion.

It seems that throughout this adventure Mirabeau was filled with terror at the thought that the Court was not sincere and that he was being led into a trap, for on arrival at a side entrance to the park of Saint-Cloud he handed his nephew a letter with the words: 'I do not know whether they are going to treat loyally with me or to have me assassinated, so if I am not back here in three-quarters of an hour, start off post-haste and give this letter to the commander of the National Guards; have the tocsin sounded, and announce the perfidy of the Court to the people.'<sup>1</sup>

Mme Campan relates that Mirabeau then entered the gate and was led by someone to a place in the gardens where the Queen was waiting for him, that on seeing him she opened the conversation by saying: 'In the case of an ordinary enemy . . . I should be making a great mistake at this moment, but when speaking to a Mirabeau,' etc., and finally that Mirabeau had left her, saying: 'Madame, the monarchy is saved.'<sup>2</sup>

But all this seems to be the outcome of Mme Campan's imagination. Apart from the improbability that, in view of the Queen's character and her opinion of Mirabeau, she would have descended to such gross flattery on meeting him for the first time, the whole story of a rendezvous in the park is shown by documentary evidence to have been a fable. Mme Campan, who can be safely quoted with regard to the Queen's private life which, as her second *femme de chambre*, she was in a position to observe, cannot be relied on when she speaks of the secret political enterprises in which Marie Antoinette was engaged. And we happen to know that she had been carefully kept out of the negotiations with Mirabeau, for La Marck relates that on his visits to the Tuileries the Queen gave him particular

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Campan, p. 280.

injunctions to come when Mme Campan was out and Mme Thibaut, the first *femme de chambre*, was in attendance. It was not, says La Marck, that she had exactly any cause for complaint against Mme Campan, but that this woman had connections which did not please the Queen.<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville says that one of these suspect friends of Mme Campan was a certain Roux-Fazillac, who acted as a double-cross spy on the Queen, and other contemporaries confirm the statement that she did not enjoy the full confidence of Marie Antoinette. Mme Campan was therefore the last person to whom she would have confided the story of what happened on July 3 at Saint-Cloud, and indeed the secret of this meeting with Mirabeau was so well kept that even Madame Elisabeth knew nothing about it. Four months later, on November 3, we find her writing with incredulity to Mme de Raigecourt about the rumours that the Queen was in touch with Mirabeau.

To return then to La Marck, whose account of events seems likely to be correct as coming from Mirabeau himself. After entering the garden gate Mirabeau went to the Palace and was shown into the Queen's apartment, where he also found the King. Although persuaded by La Marck that Mirabeau had not taken part in the scenes of October 5 and 6, the first sight of this famous political adventurer filled her with such fright and horror as to make her feel physically ill. But recovering herself she listened with her usual grace and dignity whilst Mirabeau expressed regrets for his past conduct and assured her of his fidelity in the future. He was no less touched by the calm resignation of the King and by the moderation of his views on the re-establishment of the royal authority. If only Louis XVI had had cleverer Ministers, he said afterwards, it would have been easy for him, with his character, to prevent the disasters of the Revolution.

Mirabeau left the Palace enchanted with his interview, which had lasted long enough for him to feel some anxiety

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, 1. 105.

about the letter he had left with his nephew. Led back by two people to the garden gate, who vanished into the shadows of the trees as he passed through it, he found the Comte du Saillant still waiting for him, and asked breathlessly for the return of the letter. Then, pausing a moment until the footsteps of his companions had died away, he went up to his nephew and grasping him by the arm, said in a low voice trembling with emotion: 'She is very great, very noble and very unfortunate, Victor, but I will save her!' <sup>1</sup>

Never, the Comte du Saillant said afterwards, had he seen his uncle so profoundly moved. More than ever Mirabeau realized now the truth of the words he had written in his second Memoir for the Court on June 20: 'The King has only one man near him; that is his wife. (Le roi n'a qu'un homme; c'est sa femme.)' <sup>2</sup>

Carefully as the secret of this visit had been kept, a rumour went round that Mirabeau had been to Saint-Cloud, but the Assembly was able to find out nothing about it. Only the criers went about the streets of Paris calling out: 'The great treachery of the Comte de Mirabeau!' How truly had Mirabeau himself declared: 'It is but one step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian rock!'

For, of course, the moment he was found to have gone over to the Court his power would be ended. This was what the King and Queen, like their advisers Mercy and La Marck, failed to realize. Whilst trusting no one completely, for they had been deceived by everyone in turn, they entertained great hopes of the support Mirabeau would be able to give them. They overlooked the fact that his whole strength lay in his revolutionary violence; deprived of this he would be as helpless as a shorn Samson. Hence the futility of winning over demagogues; powerful to destroy, they are powerless to maintain or to construct.

<sup>1</sup> Horace de Viel Castel, *Marie Antoinette et la Révolution Française* (1859), p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 335.

Buoyed up, however, by renewed hopes, Marie Antoinette showed herself more sanguine than ever. Her kindly nature, says La Marck, 'made her imagine that we exaggerated the perversity of her enemies.' Mirabeau groaned over the tranquil attitude of the Court, foreseeing the fearful fate that awaited the royal family, and now more often than ever he repeated the terrible phrase he had uttered before the march on Versailles: 'The King and Queen will perish—you will see it; the populace will batter their corpses!' <sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette could not bring herself to believe that in the end the nation would not recognize all that Louis XVI had done for it: 'We must inspire confidence in this unhappy people,' she wrote on May 29 to her brother Leopold II. 'It is only an excess of patience and the purity of our intentions that can bring it back to us; sooner or later it will realize how, for its own happiness, it must hold to one chief, and what a chief! he who by the excess of his goodness, in order to re-establish peace and happiness, has sacrificed his opinions, his safety and even his liberty. No, I cannot believe that so many misfortunes and so many virtues will not one day be rewarded.' <sup>2</sup>

On the same day she wrote to her sister, the Archduchess Marie-Christine, telling her of the way all her movements are watched, and she goes on to say: 'I defy the universe to find any real wrong in me; in fact I can only gain by being guarded and followed so closely, for all my words, all my desires and all my actions only tend in the first place to the happiness of the King, for whom I would shed the last drop of my blood, but also, in truth, to the happiness of all, for I only desire an order of things that will bring back peace and tranquillity to this unhappy country and prepare for my poor child a happier future than ours; as for ourselves, we have seen too many horrors and too much bloodshed ever to be really happy again.' <sup>3</sup>

At one moment it seemed as if the King and Queen had

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 81, 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 172.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.



regained their place in the hearts of the people; this was during the Fête de la Fédération, celebrating the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, on July 14, 1790. The fête was thus named because deputies of the National Guards, known as *fédérés* to the number of 15,000 men, representing three millions, came to Paris from all over France to take part in the celebrations. The spirit of these deputations was perfectly loyal, and the King, who came to Paris for the occasion, received the most touching marks of their devotion. Thus on July 12 the deputies from Tours came to offer him a ring that had belonged to Henri IV, saying: 'You have, Sire, the generous heart of Henri IV, your goodness makes you like him, the idol of all the French. . . .' The King accepted the ring with pleasure, and on returning to his apartment observed: 'I have never worn a ring but I will willingly wear this one.'

The loyal Bretons, on arrival, halted at the Tuileries beneath the King's windows and their commander went up to pay his respects to Louis XVI, who embraced him with fatherly tenderness, saying: 'Give this embrace to all your brothers from me'—a message which was met with enthusiastic cries of 'Vive le Roi!' <sup>1</sup>

On the following day La Fayette, as the major-general of the Fédération, of which the King was the head, led a deputation to Louis XVI and made a speech assuring him of their loyalty, to which the King replied in these beautiful words:

'Tell your fellow-citizens again that I wish I could speak to them all as I speak to you here, tell them again that their King is their father, their brother, their friend, that he can be happy only in their happiness, great with their glory, mighty through their liberty, rich through their prosperity, that he can suffer only in their griefs. Above all make the words or rather the feelings of my heart to be heard in the humblest cottages and in the dwellings of the unfortunate; tell them that if I cannot go with them into their homes, I

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, v. 113-115.

desire to be there by my affection and by means of laws that will protect the weak, to watch with them, to live for them, to die if necessary for them.' <sup>1</sup>

For the moment it seemed as if Louis XVI at last had come into his own; face to face with the people, he was always at his best, and they, left to themselves, showed that in spite of all efforts to seduce them from their allegiance they had retained their love for him.

Marie Antoinette had dreaded the day of July 14 on which the royal family were to make a public appearance, the more so because the Duc d'Orléans had been allowed to return from England and arrived in Paris on the 10th. But the conspirators showed no sign of rallying their forces and it was La Fayette who dominated the proceedings. The Parisians, who had spent days digging in the Champ de Mars to prepare it for the occasion, assembled in their thousands and with their good humour restored by manual labour gave the royal family a rousing welcome when they arrived on the scene. After mass had been celebrated by Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, on 'the altar of the country,' a Te Deum was sung. La Fayette, in the name of the army, took the oath of fidelity 'to the Nation, the Law and the King'; this was repeated by the President of the Assembly and echoed by 300,000 voices. Then the King, rising from his throne, said in a strong voice: 'I, King of the French, swear to employ the power conferred on me by the Constitutional Act of the State, to maintain the Constitution decreed by the Assembly and accepted by me.'

Thereupon the Queen came forward spontaneously with the Dauphin in her arms, and showing him to the people, said: 'Here is my son, he joins with me in the same sentiments.'

This unexpected action provoked tremendous applause and thousands of voices shouted: 'Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine! Vive Monseigneur le Dauphin!' Such was the enthusiasm of the people that efforts to revive the revolu-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de La Fayette*, iii. 6.

tionary spirit met with no response. La Fayette, who was now going through a fresh attack of republicanism, raised his hat and sang the bloodthirsty refrain of the 'Ça ira!' whilst a touch of comedy was introduced by a band of young butchers with their sleeves rolled up and their arms stained with blood, carrying a placard on a pole with the words: 'Tremble, aristocrats, here come the butcher boys!' But these demonstrations failed to shake the loyalty of the Parisians, who continued for days to shout and sing and dance and feast on the Champ de Mars and in the Champs Élysées.

This day of July 14, 1790, says Mme de Tourzel, was one 'of real happiness for the King and Queen and all those devoted to them. It was an intoxication of feeling and it was the Queen's last happy day.'

No sooner had she returned to Saint-Cloud than an attempt was made to assassinate her. The Italian, Rotondo, one of the vilest instruments of the Orléaniste conspiracy, who two years later played the leading part in the ghastly murder of the Princesse de Lamballe, was found lurking in the gardens of Saint-Cloud, but this time the vigilance of La Fayette prevented the execution of the crime. A plot to poison the Queen was then discovered by the police, and Mme Campan, thinking that means might be found to tamper with the powdered sugar which the Queen kept in her room for making 'eau sucrée,' carefully changed the contents of the sugar bowl three or four times a day. It was then that Marie Antoinette, finding her engaged in this precaution, told her she was giving herself unnecessary trouble and added the prophetic words: 'Remember they will never employ a grain of poison against me. Brinvilliers are not of this century; they can use calumny, which is much more effectual for killing people, and it is by that they will make me die.'<sup>1</sup>

It seems that just then the Queen received some warning on the dangers of Freemasonry. Was it from Mirabeau?

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 276.

We know that this extraordinary man, after describing with horror the lurid rites of the Illuminati, had ended by allowing himself to be drawn into that formidable sect and had even helped to establish a Lodge of the Order in Paris. But in renouncing Orléanism had he also renounced the Freemasonry of which the Duc d'Orléans was the head, and its further development—Illuminism? And had he in that secret interview with the King and Queen perhaps lifted a corner of the veil that shrouded the great plan of world revolution?

At any rate, in a letter to her brother Leopold II on August 17, Marie Antoinette displays a surprising knowledge of the real aims of the society she had once declared to be innocuous. 'Be well on your guard where you are [in Austria],' she writes, 'with regard to all associations of Freemasons. You must already have been warned that it is by this means that all the monsters here count on attaining the same end in every country. Oh, God, preserve my fatherland and you from such misfortunes!'<sup>1</sup>

Was this also what Montjoie meant by that cryptic passage in his history of Marie Antoinette? Referring to the Duc d'Orléans, he says: 'I will not examine whether this wicked prince, thinking he was acting on his own behalf, was not moved by that *invisible hand* which seems to have created all the events of our Revolution in order to lead us to a goal that we cannot see yet but which I think we shall see before long.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus Montjoie, the greatest antagonist of the Duc d'Orléans, was brought to recognize that there was something behind the Orléaniste conspiracy, something so dark and dangerous that he dared not breathe its name, and after this one tantalizing hint never again returned to the subject.

During the Duc's absence in England public opinion had been roused with regard to the conspirators and demanded an enquiry into the crimes of October 5 and 6. Accordingly,

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 156.

on June 26, 1790, just before his return to France, proceedings were taken by the Châtelet of Paris and no less than 398 witnesses were called to testify as to all they had seen or heard during those days. From this evidence the guilt of Orléans and his supporters was established without the shadow of a doubt, and on August 5, 1790, the Duc and Mirabeau were unanimously convicted and declared to be deserving of arrest.

But such was the power wielded by the conspiracy that when the findings of the Tribunal were placed before the National Assembly the Orléanistes succeeded in getting its decision reversed, and on October 2, 1790, the Assembly declared that there were no grounds of accusation against the two delinquents or even against the assassins of the bodyguards.

So the great opportunity for crushing the conspiracy had passed. That the King himself had contributed to the exoneration of his infamous cousin by his over-magnanimity in shielding him from obloquy by his 'mission' to England cannot be denied. The Queen also showed too great generosity. For when a deputation from the Châtelet had come to the Tuileries and asked for her evidence on the October days, Marie Antoinette declined to testify against the Duc d'Orléans, saying: 'I saw everything, I heard everything, I have forgotten everything. (J'ai tout vu, j'ai tout entendu, j'ai tout oublié.)'<sup>1</sup>

The Orléanistes showed their gratitude by filling the report for their defence put before the Assembly on October 2 with venomous insinuations against the Queen.

The futility of attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable was once more clearly demonstrated.

Did the magnanimity of Marie Antoinette, however, have the effect of finally winning Mirabeau over to her cause? What did he, as a Freemason and Illuminatus, know about the Affair of the Necklace?

It is significant to find that when in November of this same

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Conjuraton d'Orléans*, iii. 71.

year of 1790 Mme de la Motte returned from London and settled into a magnificent house in the Place Vendôme under the protection of the Duc d'Orléans, no one was more indignant than Mirabeau. The plan of the Orléanistes was now to revive the whole affair and by a fresh trial to incriminate the Queen. The Baron de Staël, in his diplomatic correspondence under the date of November 10, writes: 'They say for certain that Mme de la Motte is to ask for a revision of her trial, and that she often sees Mme de Sillery (formerly Mme de Genlis), gouvernante of the Orléans children. Dark and terrible things are being plotted against the Queen.'

'It was Mirabeau,' says La Marck, 'who informed the Court of this execrable conspiracy. . . . I know of no infamy during that period so fertile in villainies, which made Mirabeau so angry as this odious plot. It made him bound with rage and redoubled his energy. "I will tear this unfortunate Queen from her executioners!" he cried, "or I will die in the attempt."' <sup>1</sup> In his Memoir for the Court, dated November 12, he wrote: 'It is not merely to amuse public malignity that the revision of Mme de la Motte's trial will be brought about, it is the Queen who is directly aimed at,' and he went on to say: 'The Queen, whose character they know, as also her clearness of perception and her firmness, would be the first object of their attack both as the first and strongest rampart of the throne and as the sentinel watching the most closely over the safety of the monarch.' <sup>2</sup>

Through the advice and energy of Mirabeau the plot was defeated and the Affair of the Necklace ended finally with Mme de la Motte, who, after returning to England, threw herself out of her window in London and died in fearful agony on August 23, 1791.

But, as might have been foreseen, all Mirabeau's efforts to save the royal family proved unavailing. This man, who has been represented as a political genius, displayed, when it came to action, no greater firmness than the King. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 320.

true that at moments he showed a power of statesmanship, a vision and a foresight beyond any of his contemporaries, that he was indeed the one politician who saw from the beginning that everything was leading towards 'a vast demolition,' yet he could not resist pandering to democracy—the democracy in which he did not believe but which he dared not oppose with boldness or consistency. Whilst deploring the excesses of the Revolution he felt that it was only by appearing to identify himself with it that he could hope to change its course. Yet in his advice to the Court he advocated a policy that the King and Queen regarded as too reactionary to follow. Thus in his Memoir of August 13, 1790, he had boldly declared that 'civil war was certain and perhaps necessary.' Was the King prepared to make it?

Marie Antoinette received this proposal with consternation; the Memoir, she wrote to Mercy, 'seems to me so extraordinary that I thought it necessary you should know of it. . . . Frankly, it seems to me mad from one end to the other. . . . How can Mirabeau, or any other thinking being, believe that the moment could ever come—especially at the present time—for us to provoke civil war?'<sup>1</sup>

From this moment the Queen's faith in Mirabeau was shaken and she refused to accord him another interview. Had he only known it, he would have found in Madame Elisabeth a stouter ally. For the virile nature of the young princess held something Cromwellian in its religious militarism; she could pray but she could also fight. In the midst of her devotions her thoughts turned to action, and like Marie Antoinette, though with less resignation, she would have shed the last drop of her blood in the cause she held sacred—the life and the honour of the King. Thus she wrote on May 1, 1790, to Mme de Bombelles: 'You fear civil war, but I confess I regard it as necessary, in the first place because I consider it exists, for once a kingdom is divided into two parties and the weakest party can only save

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 188.



*Photo : Bulloz*

MADAME ELISABETH AND THE DAUPHIN  
*from the Portrait by Danloux*





its life by letting itself be despoiled, it is impossible not to call this civil war. Besides, anarchy can never end without it, and the longer it is put off, the more blood will be shed. That is my principle; it may be wrong: however, if I were the King, it would be my guide and perhaps it would avert great disasters.' <sup>1</sup>

It was as if in a flash of prophetic vision Madame Elisabeth had seen the seas of blood that were to flow if the Revolution was not arrested—the massacres of September, the Reign of Terror. . . . But who, at this stage, could foretell such incredible developments with certainty?

Nothing grieved Madame Elisabeth more deeply than the assent given by the King to the civil constitution of the clergy on August 24, 1790. Already on November 2, 1789, the goods of the clergy had been 'nationalized'; by this further decree the priests became simply government officials and preferments were to be made by order of civil authority without reference to Rome. Finally, on December 26, 1790, the clergy were required to take an oath of fidelity to their civil constitution on pain of being dismissed from their posts.

As a fervent Catholic Louis XVI went through agonies of mind before he could bring himself to agree to this secularization of Church government. In his distress he wrote twice to the Pope to obtain his consent, but the Pope only expressed his disapproval. From all sides the higher clergy urged the King not to yield, and Madame Elisabeth added her supplications to the rest. But the Assembly, in the person of the Minister of Justice, Duport du Tertre, harassed the King from morning till night to sign the final decree of December 26, assuring him that if he refused, the populace would wreak their vengeance on the ecclesiastics and deputies of the Assembly who shared his views.<sup>2</sup>

Popular demonstrations were organized, incendiary pamphlets were circulated, finally the King was made to

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Mme de Tourzel, Mémoires*, i. 218.

believe that further resistance would actually endanger the lives of his family and of everyone at the Tuileries. Then, with a trembling hand, he appended his signature to the decree, an act he was to repent in bitterness of soul to the last day of his life.

The sensation this event created in the minds of the devout was terrific; Madame Elisabeth feared it would bring down the wrath of God still more heavily. Only Marie Antoinette understood that the King was not so much to blame as they supposed. Writing to the Duchesse de FitzJames in December 1790 she says: '... this morning I forgot to speak to you of a matter that lies very near my heart. You know I have often spoken to you of the King and of the pain it causes me to see people so unjust to him; try in your conversation to prove that he is not as indifferent (insouciant) as they say and that he is as unhappy as he can possibly be, for that is very true.'<sup>1</sup>

Such indeed was the distress of the King's mind by the spring of 1791 that on March 4 he fell ill with high fever and blood-spitting and for some weeks his condition was precarious. The Assembly hypocritically sent every day for his bulletin and on his recovery ordered a *Te Deum* to be sung in thanksgiving.

The people, however, rejoiced sincerely and astounding popular demonstrations took place. Illuminations were planned and only prevented by wind and rain which, says a revolutionary student writing from Paris at the time, was 'a great pity, for the inhabitants were very much disposed to illuminate in order to show their joy at the fact that the King who is cherished here and must also be cherished in all the departments (of France) had happily recovered his health.'<sup>2</sup>

The little Dauphin on his own account had added to his evening prayer a couplet, from the opera *Peter the Great*,

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii 206.

<sup>2</sup> Gaston Maugras, *Journal d'un Étudiant de Paris pendant la Révolution* (1910), p. 91.

which he had heard sung, and never once failed to repeat it during his father's illness :

‘ Exauce la prière  
Qu’ici je fais  
Conserve ce bon père  
A ses sujets.’

On March 19 the Queen wrote to the Duchesse de Fitz-James: ‘ You know all the anxiety I have been through about the King’s health ; there was all the more reason for it since it is the overflowing measure of his griefs that made him ill. Thank God, he is well now. I will not speak to you of this country ; it would only afflict us both. . . .’

Matters indeed were steadily growing worse. In February a riot had occurred which had helped to contribute to the King’s illness.

On the 19th of that month the two aunts, Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire, had set out for Rome in order to perform their religious duties under the right auspices and not under the direction of priests who had taken the oath of allegiance to the civil constitution of the clergy. The news of this event threw Paris into a ferment, the two old ladies were stopped on their journey and obliged to wait until the Assembly had passed a decree permitting them to leave France, before starting on again. Meanwhile the rumour spread that this was the beginning of an exodus of the whole royal family, and threatening crowds collected around the Tuileries demanding the recall of ‘ Mesdames,’ and crying out that they wished to see the Dauphin, who was said to have been taken out of Paris.

On February 28 the situation became still more menacing ; the mob attacked the fortress of Vincennes, and the militia under La Fayette were called in to quell the riot. It was then that 300 loyal gentlemen, fearing an invasion of the Tuileries during the absence of the troops, armed themselves with swords and pistols, and collected in the Château for the defence of the royal family. This action led to an uproar ; La Fayette was quickly summoned and the gallant

three hundred were made to disarm. The King himself took charge of their weapons, and as they left the Château they were assailed with insults and even with blows by the frenzied crowd outside. This day, during which no provocative action had been committed by the King's defenders, became known as the Day of Daggers (*Journée des Poignards*) and provided a fresh pretext for revolutionary violence.

A month later an event occurred which dealt a blow to all the hopes raised by Mirabeau. On March 27 the great demagogue fell ill—according to many contemporaries from the effects of poison—and on April 2 he died, saying with his last breath: 'J'emporte avec moi le deuil de la monarchie; après ma mort, les factieux s'en disputeront les lambeaux.'

How far Mirabeau would really have been able to save the monarchy is questionable. Had he shown more continuity in his policy he could have been of great service to the King and Queen. But his perpetual inconsistencies undermined their confidence. Even La Marck admits that, whilst animated by the noble desire to restore power to the King, he did not always remain true to his principles. Thus in his Memoir of October 14, 1790, in which he made a sort of profession of faith, he proposed a system of democracy which was in manifest contradiction with everything he had said previously to La Marck, and his friend can only explain it by saying that, in spite of his monarchic sentiments, he did not foresee that 'his theories, put into practice, would infallibly have engulfed the throne beneath the tide of democracy.'<sup>1</sup>

So one more adviser had failed the royal family; meanwhile others had left them. In September 1790, Mercy had deserted the sinking ship and betaken himself to Vienna, whence he later made his way to London and spent the rest of his days there consoled by his faithful Rosalie.<sup>2</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> *Mirabeau et la Marck*, i. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Mlle Rosalie Levasseur, the opera-singer with whom Mercy had a liaison lasting twenty-four years.

same month Necker had finally taken his departure, and this event which, only fourteen months earlier, had roused popular indignation to the point of storming the Bastille, now passed quite unnoticed. So vanished from the scene the one-time idol of the people, ignored and unregretted.

Thus abandoned, the Queen was thrown on her own resources, and on the help of the only man left to advise her, the only man, however, who was absolutely devoted to her cause and the King's, and whom she believed she could trust to the uttermost—the Comte Axel de Fersen.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE QUESTION OF FERSEN

THE nature of the relations existing between Marie Antoinette and Fersen is a question around which controversy has raged intermittently for over a century. Yet no really scientific attempt has been made to settle it. For this purpose it would be necessary to proceed along quite different lines from those which have hitherto been adopted. The story must be divided into two distinct periods: the *legendary*, relating to the shadowy love affair said to have taken place between 1778 and 1789, and the *real*, relating to the known facts concerning the Queen's friendship with Fersen during the Revolution. The first was dealt with in the first part of this work <sup>1</sup>; the second will be considered here. In order, however, to make the present book complete the events described in the previous one must be briefly recapitulated.

Comte Hans Axel de Fersen, son of the Swedish Field-Marshal Axel Friedrich de Fersen, was born on September 4, 1755, and at the age of fifteen was sent on his travels about Europe which lasted for three years. In November 1773 he reached Paris, and on the 19th of that month was presented at the Court of France. During the course of the following two months he was present at four balls given by Marie Antoinette, then the Dauphine, and met her again at the Opera ball of January 30, 1774, which she attended with her husband, his brothers and their wives and where she talked to Fersen under the cover of her mask. No scandal whatever attached to this episode and no particular attraction appears to have been felt on either side.

<sup>1</sup> *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette : before the Revolution*, pp. 21, 194, 309-321.

It was not until four years later, when Fersen, aged twenty-two, returned to France in August 1778, that the 'coup de foudre' is supposed to have taken place. According to one version of the story Marie Antoinette, now Queen and expecting her first child, was struck by the beauty of the young Swede and felt an immediate tendresse for him; according to another it was Fersen who fell madly in love with the Queen. Both versions rest, however, on the slenderest evidence, and whatever rumours were current at the Court, Fersen's departure for the American War of Independence put an end to them for the time being.

We know nothing of what happened on his return to Europe in 1783, of the manner in which he was received by Marie Antoinette, nor of any particular favour shown him then by her beyond the fact that Fersen having, on the advice of the Swedish ambassador, asked for the command of a French regiment, the Queen wrote letters on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> Incidentally she had done the same in the case of the Swedish Comte de Stedingk.<sup>2</sup> From this date onwards Fersen divided his time between France and Sweden, performing his duties as officer in the armies of both countries<sup>3</sup> and, on his visits to Versailles, frequenting the Queen's circle, though not the Polignac set. During this period he was certainly regarded as one of her particular friends; there is, however, nothing to show that their friendship was of an intimate kind. It is again only according to vague rumours that Fersen was said to have conceived a passion which evoked a response in the heart of Marie Antoinette, and even these rumours are difficult to trace. No correspondence, diplomatic or otherwise, records them at the time, no serious history of the period refers to them, few *mémoristes* mention their existence. Except for three or four malicious or irresponsible writers whose recollections were published long afterwards, no one

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 25. A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*,

p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, i. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. p. xli.



seems to have attached any importance to them, nor do these retailers of scandal quote a single incident which could serve as a ground for the supposition that tender relations existed between the Queen and Fersen. After the Revolution all such rumours died down as baseless, and even the Comte de Provence felt impelled to defend the Queen's memory against the calumnies, which he himself had helped to circulate during her lifetime, by drawing up a lengthy Memoir intended for publication.<sup>1</sup>

Let us regard this question for a moment in the light of British justice which, in the divorce courts, lays down two conditions as essential for proof that an immoral act has taken place—inclination and opportunity.

With regard to inclination it was pointed out in the first part of this work that if Marie Antoinette had had any tendency to *galantries*, it was surely whilst enduring the unnatural conditions of the first seven years of her marriage that she would have been likely to give way to it. If she came triumphantly through this test, perhaps the hardest to which a woman can be subjected, and, during those wild years when she plunged recklessly into pleasure, never departed from the path of virtue, why should she have forsaken it after she had found true happiness as a wife and mother? Later on, at the period during which she was more particularly accused of a *tendresse* for Fersen, inclination can still less have led her into amorous adventures; saddened by the Affair of the Necklace and distraught by the perils and perplexities that assailed her throughout the early stages of the Revolution, she can have had little heart for love-making. As the Duchesse d'Abrantès observes: 'How could one fall in love at such a time as this?'<sup>2</sup>

With regard to opportunity, is it possible that any such intrigue could have been carried on under the fierce light that beats upon the throne? At Versailles, always sur-

<sup>1</sup> *Réflexions Historiques sur Marie Antoinette* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for July 15, 1904. See *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire des Salons de Paris*, i. 213.

rounded by courtiers and attendants at her levers and couchers and during the ceremony of the toilette, taking her meals in public, followed everywhere she went by ladies-in-waiting, equerries or pages, with the 'eyes of Europe'—the Ministers of all countries—watching her, how could she have had a lover without a dozen people knowing it? The Austrian ambassador, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, who kept the Empress Maria Theresa informed about the Queen's daily life down to the minutest detail in his long secret reports, had organized a complete spy system which enabled him to keep a watch on all her movements,<sup>1</sup> and the Spanish ambassador, the Comte d'Aranda, descended to the same methods by questioning her maids and footmen.<sup>2</sup> Yet not once in the vast correspondence of Mercy is the name of Fersen even mentioned, nor amidst the malicious gossip of the other ambassadors do we find so much as a hint that he was regarded with particular favour by Marie Antoinette. After the royal family had been brought to the Tuileries she was even more closely surrounded, with one National Guard sleeping in her antechamber and others keeping watch on her all day. In a letter to her sister already quoted, she herself had written of this: 'I defy the universe to find any real wrong in me; indeed I can only gain by being guarded and followed so closely.'<sup>3</sup>

The fact remains that throughout her whole life not one specific incident was ever quoted which could be regarded as compromising, and not a single person, either equerry, lady-in-waiting, maid, footman, page, guard or other attendant at Versailles, Trianon, the Tuileries or Saint-Cloud, ever brought an accusation against her on the score

<sup>1</sup> 'I have made sure of three people in the lower ranks of Mme the Archduchess's service; these are one of her women and two garçons de chambre who give me an exact account of everything that goes on around her,' etc. etc. . . . 'so that there is not an hour in the day of which I am not in a position to give an account about what Mme the Archduchess may have said or done or heard,' etc. Letter to Maria Theresa on November 6, 1770. *Correspondance de Mercy*, i. 97, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Flammermont, *Correspondances Diplomatiques*, pp. 476, 477.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 173.

of Fersen or of any lover, even during her trial when such evidence would have met with a reward.

So to come to the second period, the real history of Marie Antoinette and Fersen during the Revolution.

In 1787 Fersen had entered on a new rôle at the Court of France as the accredited emissary of Gustavus III, King of Sweden, who, in the summer of that year, sent him to Versailles with letters for Louis XVI and again in the following year dispatched him to Paris to watch over the interests of his royal master. From this moment Fersen remained in France, sometimes in Paris, sometimes with his regiment at Maubeuge or Valenciennes, and all the time keeping Gustavus III informed of the course events were taking in that country.<sup>1</sup>

After the Revolution broke out Fersen played a still more political part, and at the end of 1789, having received permission to relinquish his military duties, he was ordered by Gustavus III to stay in Paris so as to act as intermediary between the Kings of France and Sweden by conveying their letters to each other and enabling them to exchange their views.<sup>2</sup> It was therefore in an official capacity that Fersen settled in Paris after the royal family had been brought to the Tuileries, and he remained there until the flight to Varennes in June 1791.

From this moment we can follow Fersen's career quite clearly in his private papers, preserved by his family at Stafund in Sweden and given to the world for the first time in 1877 by his great-nephew, the Baron de Klinckowström, who brought out selections from them in two large volumes entitled *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*. These contained portions of his private Journal for the years 1771 to 1780, and from 1791 onwards, his letters to his father beginning in 1778 and his correspondence with Marie Antoinette, Gustavus III, and others.

It is important to note that this correspondence with the

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. pp. xli, xlii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. pp. lii, 74.

Queen, which comprised all the letters known to have passed between them, does not begin until after the flight to Varennes. If he had been her lover or even her intimate friend all along, is it likely that not one letter of hers written before that date would have been preserved by him? But her first letter to him is dated June 28, 1791. Until then his correspondence with his father is our source of information concerning his relations with the royal family; from this it is evident that up to the end of 1789 he followed political events with keen interest, but wrote of them without any inside knowledge and not as one behind the scenes and in the confidence of the King and Queen. His visits to the Court appear to have been made as a matter of form or as the representative of Gustavus III; nowhere does he speak of private interviews with Marie Antoinette, of visits to Trianon, still less of anything that could suggest romantic meetings. All that he says of his own rôle at the beginning of the Revolution is that he was at Versailles during the terrible days of October 5 and 6 and returned to Paris in one of the King's carriages following the royal family.

In this connection a most preposterous story was circulated long after the Revolution had ended. In 1822 O'Meara brought out his book *Napoleon in Exile*, where the ex-Emperor is reported to have said:

'Mme Campan had a very indifferent opinion of Marie Antoinette. She told me that a person well known for his attachment to the Queen (Comte de Fersen) came to see her at Versailles on the 5th or 6th of October, where he remained all night. The Palace was stormed by the populace. Marie Antoinette fled undressed from her own chamber to that of the King for shelter, and the lover descended from the window. On going to seek the Queen in her bedroom, Mme Campan found she was absent; but discovered a pair of breeches which the favourite had left behind in his haste and which were immediately recognized.'<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the absurdity of supposing that even if Marie

Antoinette had been given to amorous intrigues she would have chosen this terrible night to indulge in one, the whole story is refuted by Mme Campan herself. For in referring to the 5th of October in her *Mémoires* she says: 'At that time I was not in attendance on the Queen'<sup>1</sup>—a statement confirmed by Hanet Cléry, the valet de chambre of Madame Royale<sup>2</sup>—and it was her sister, Mme Auguié, and the first waiting-woman, Mme Thibaut, who were with Marie Antoinette when she went to bed at two o'clock in the morning and who remained at her door until the mob burst into the Château. The story attributed to Mme Campan is thus seen to be a complete fabrication and a singularly clumsy one; had any night but the 5th of October been cited it would have been impossible to quote her in evidence against it, the choice of the one night when she stated she was not present at once proclaimed its falseness. The discrepancy was pointed out by John Wilson Croker in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1822, but did not prevent Lord Holland from repeating another version of the same story in his *Foreign Reminiscences* where he says:

'Mme Campan confessed a curious fact, namely that Fersen was in the Queen's boudoir or bedchamber tête-à-tête with her Majesty on the famous night of the 6th of October. He escaped observation with considerable difficulty in a disguise which she, Mme Campan, herself procured for him. This, M. de Talleyrand, though generally somewhat averse to detailing anecdotes disparaging to the royal family of France, has twice recounted to me, and assured me that he had it from Mme Campan herself.'<sup>3</sup>

So on the authority of Talleyrand—Freemason, Illuminatus and Orléaniste—and of Lord Holland—as ardent a

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mme Campan . . . was not at the Court during the days of October 5 and 6, yet she speaks of them in her *Mémoires*,' and Hanet Cléry goes on to show that she was wrong even in her published account of those days. See his *Mémoires* published in 1825, vol. i. p. 167. Mme Campan herself says she returned to the Château in the morning of the 6th when the royal family were preparing to start for Paris.

<sup>3</sup> *Foreign Reminiscences* (1851), p. 19.

Whig as his uncle Charles James Fox, the friend and supporter of the Duc d'Orléans—Lord Holland, whose own moral character may be judged by the fact that his eldest son was illegitimate and could not succeed to the title—the public was once more asked to believe this monstrous story! It will be noticed that it is usually the people whose own morals are not above reproach who find the greatest satisfaction in casting doubts on the morality of others.

At this repetition of the old libel Croker wrote again indignantly in the *Quarterly Review* for March 1851:

'Whether the falsehood be Buonaparte's, Talleyrand's or Lord Holland's—it is utterly impossible that Madame Campan could have told the story related by any of them; for she left behind her her own written evidence—and the great *Procédure* or legal inquiry before the *Cour du Châtelet* in 1790 had already established the fact—that Madame Campan—the supposed eye-witness and accomplice—*happened NOT to have been in attendance on the Queen on the celebrated day or night of the 5th of October!*—which by another, by no means unimportant, "inaccuracy" Lord Holland calls the 6th of October. . . .

'The calumny published by O'Meara in 1822 was then, as completely as now, refuted by us; and yet Lord Holland . . . not dying till 1840, has chosen to ignore, as it were, all the previous evidence, and to leave behind him for posthumous publication an additionally offensive version of this famous slander.'<sup>1</sup>

The story was refuted in France during that year of 1851 on the same grounds of Mme Campan's alibi by A. de Bacourt in his work on Mirabeau,<sup>2</sup> but neither of these refutations has prevented modern libellists from repeating it. In view of the indignation expressed by Napoleon I and even by Talleyrand at the aspersions cast on Marie Antoinette in the *Mémoires* of Lauzun,<sup>3</sup> it seems improbable

<sup>1</sup> Republished in Croker's *Essays on the French Revolution* (1857), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirabeau et la Marck*, i. 207.

<sup>3</sup> See *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: before the Revolution*, pp. 163, 164.

that either of them made the statements attributed to them by O'Meara and Lord Holland. As to Mme Campan, it is significant to note that the libel in question appeared for the first time in the year she died, so that she could not be called upon to contradict it. But what does she herself say of the Queen's character in her *Mémoires*?

'I who for fifteen years saw her attached to her august consort and her children, kind to her servitors, unfortunately too polite, too simple, too much on an equality with the people of the Court, I cannot bear to see her character reviled. I wish I had a hundred mouths, I wish I had wings and could inspire the same confidence in the truth which is so readily accorded to lies.' <sup>1</sup>

Mme Campan may not have been altogether trustworthy; doubts indeed have been cast on her fidelity to the Queen by royalists who suspected her of sympathy with the Revolution on account of her connections. Croker considered that, although she was certainly inclined to liberal opinions, 'the charge of treachery was undoubtedly false.' Nothing indeed points to the possibility that she was as shameless a liar as O'Meara and Lord Holland make her appear. For if, as O'Meara states, she had 'a very indifferent opinion of Marie Antoinette' and really told the story attributed to her, she lied in her *Mémoires*, so what reliance could be placed on her statements?

For many years after the refutation of the Campan story nothing more was heard of the Marie Antoinette and Fersen question either in England or France. Carlyle disdained to notice it, and except in obscure pornographic brochures the same silence was maintained by French writers even of the pro-revolutionary kind. The innocence of the Queen was accepted by all serious historians of the opposite school of thought, not only by her panegyrists, the Goncourts and Imbert de Saint-Amand, but by such impartial writers as M. de la Rocheterie, M. Eugène Bimbenet, author of the highly documented work on the flight to Varennes, M.

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 422.

Lenotre, M. Pierre de Nolhac and others too numerous to mention. M. Léouzon le Duc, in his Introduction to the diplomatic correspondence of the Baron de Staël, says of the calumnies circulated with regard to the relations between the Queen and Fersen: 'We need not concern ourselves here with these pamphlets inspired by unhealthy passion and, besides this, absolutely devoid of any valid proof.'

The great *Biographie Michaud*, corresponding to our *Dictionary of National Biography*, whilst devoting a long article to Fersen, observes: 'The successes attributed to him with the ladies of the Court and above all with the Queen Marie Antoinette have been greatly exaggerated and even, we consider, entirely invented.'

The Swedish *Konversations Lexikon* confirms this view: 'Fersen was very highly placed in the favour of the Queen Marie Antoinette, for whom he was animated by the most chivalrous devotion. As to the possible reciprocity of a tenderer feeling, this is totally devoid of all probability.'

But the circumstance which perhaps more than any other testifies to the innocence of Marie Antoinette is the silence of the revolutionaries with regard to Fersen. In all the writings and speeches of the leaders, from Camille Desmoulins to Hébert, in all the diatribes of the revolutionary journalists—Mercier, Loustalot, Prudhomme, and others—the question of Fersen is never raised. Mme Roland, one of the Queen's bitterest enemies, does not once mention his name. And, as we shall see later, even the Revolutionary Tribunal maintained the same silence. This libel flourished at the Court; the Revolution absolved her.

It was from the same poisoned source, the faction hostile to her at the Court, that a further attack was directed against her in the *Mémoires* of the Comte de Saint-Priest, of which a new edition appeared in 1929. In the first part of this work contemporary evidence was quoted to show the rancorous character and disloyal conduct of this ex-Minister of Louis XVI, and it was pointed out how little reliance can be placed on his statements concerning Marie Antoinette's



relations with Fersen during the pre-Revolutionary era.<sup>1</sup> In the matter of what happened during the Revolution his evidence is equally suspect. Thus he declares that after dinner on the 6th of October he went to the Tuileries, and finding Fersen there, ordered him to withdraw for fear of compromising the Queen.<sup>2</sup> But dinner in eighteenth-century France was a midday meal, corresponding to our luncheon, and usually took place at 2 o'clock or 2.30. Now Fersen relates in his correspondence that he came to Paris in one of the King's carriages following the royal family and that they were six and a half hours en route<sup>3</sup>—other contemporaries say seven hours—so that he did not reach Paris until seven o'clock in the evening and therefore could not have been found in the Tuileries at the time Saint-Priest stated. After this Saint-Priest says that Fersen came nearly every day to the Château, passing by an entrance which La Fayette purposely left unguarded with—Saint-Priest suggests—the malicious intention of putting the Queen in the wrong. But we know that during the first three months the royal family were at the Tuileries Fersen only saw the Queen there once; it was not until after he had been appointed intermediary between Louis XVI and Gustavus III that he went frequently to the Château, more particularly before the flight to Varennes, to discuss the situation both with the King and Queen. Saint-Priest further states that whilst the royal family were at Saint-Cloud in the summer of 1790, Fersen was constantly there, arriving at dusk, and that he was known not to leave until three o'clock in the morning. Even if this was true it proves nothing against the Queen; when secret plans had to be discussed it was naturally thought safer to talk at night, and if Fersen came on business of this kind he would avoid being seen arriving in broad daylight. Saint-Priest himself relates that the Queen so little imagined any evil construction could be placed on Fersen's visits that when he, Saint-Priest, told her

<sup>1</sup> *Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette : before the Revolution*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. p. li.

they might prove dangerous, she answered carelessly: 'Tell him so if you think it advisable. As for me I think nothing of it.'<sup>1</sup> As we shall see later it seems very doubtful whether Fersen went to Saint-Cloud at all.

The Mémoires of Saint-Priest were of course hailed with rapture by the Queen's antagonists, who well knew they could count on the public's disinclination to test their reliability, and that they could use them with impunity to give a fresh impetus to the campaign against Marie Antoinette. For at the beginning of the twentieth century this campaign had been resumed with renewed vigour, and from 1905 onwards a controversy lasting for years was carried on in the *Intermédiaire des Chercheurs et Curieux*, in which it was seriously debated whether Fersen was not only the lover of the Queen but actually the father of the second Dauphin who was to be known as Louis XVII. But not one shred of evidence was brought forward in support of this contention, which has now been abandoned even by the most malignant accusers of Marie Antoinette. Besides the testimony of the Comte de Provence establishing the legitimacy of her children, the affection shown by Louis XVI for the Dauphin, his references to him as 'my son' in his correspondence and in his last will and testament, and on the other hand, the lack of interest Fersen habitually displayed in the child, his manner of alluding to him even in his private Journal as 'Mgr le Dauphin,' later as 'le Roi' and as 'that unfortunate Louis XVII'—all this provides a clear refutation of that earlier libel. Not one line in Fersen's most confidential writings recently brought to light, remotely suggests any such possibility.

Desperate to find proof of the Queen's guilt her enemies were driven to inventing. Thus an unknown correspondent wrote to the *Intermédiaire* saying that there were documents in Montreal, letters from Marie Antoinette, which provided overwhelming evidence against her. But although searching enquiries were made in Montreal nothing of the kind could

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 92.

be discovered, and no further information could be obtained from the writer of the letter since he had carefully omitted to give his address. An appeal was made to him in the columns of the *Intermédiaire* but elicited no reply.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the relations which really existed between Marie Antoinette and Fersen during the Revolution can best be judged in the light of their correspondence published by the Baron de Klinckowström. These letters, entirely political, relating to the situation of the royal family, to plans of escape and, above all, to the attitude of the Powers of Europe, were naturally of a most secret kind. Written in a very difficult cipher, to which a particular edition of *Paul et Virginie* provided the key, they were seldom confided to the ordinary post, but had to be carried by trusted messengers or smuggled across the frontier in biscuit boxes, packets of tea or chocolate, sewn into the lining of a hat or coat and so on.

Now although nothing suggestive of love is to be found in this correspondence, which whilst confidential, seldom strikes a personal note, the antagonists of Marie Antoinette detected a point they declared to be highly suspicious. For in certain of the letters, mainly those from the Queen to Fersen, passages have been erased and are indicated by rows of dots in the printed text. It was suggested that these represented words of love which Fersen had deleted out of respect for the Queen's memory. M. de la Rocheterie, the biographer of Marie Antoinette and the editor of her correspondence, who was then collecting materials for his work, wrote to Baron de Klinckowström, telling him of the construction that had been placed on these erasures and asking for his opinion on the question. In the course of a long reply the Baron said:

'All that I can tell you with certainty is that since the misfortunes of the royal family of France the Fersen family has retained the greatest veneration for those holy and

<sup>1</sup> *Intermédiaire* for May 30, 1914, p. 705.

august martyrs, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and that there is nothing amongst the papers remaining from the Comte de Fersen which can throw a shadow on the conduct of the Queen.'

The Baron then went on to discuss 'the erasures made by the Comte de Fersen in the Queen's letters,' which he accounted for by several hypotheses—that they concealed allusions to the brothers of Louis XVI with whom Marie Antoinette was not in agreement, or to the Duc d'Orléans, to the King of Sweden, to the revolutionaries, to financial questions, in a word to political secrets, which of course provides the obvious explanation. He ended by saying:

'I must beg you to excuse this long letter which, however, is shorter than I could wish, for, with regard to the facts out of which certain people have tried to forge a weapon against the memory of Marie Antoinette, my heart would have wished to express better all that it feels of veneration and of respectful compassion for that unfortunate princess who paid too dearly for the honour of being called Queen of France.'<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, was a clear denial that the Baron de Klinckowström himself had destroyed anything detrimental to Marie Antoinette. As to the erasures, we shall return to this question in a later chapter at the date when the correspondence begins, in the summer of 1791. The point to be noted here is that nothing fresh can be discovered with regard to them because the originals have all vanished—in 1896 Baron de Klinckowström is believed to have burnt the whole collection. At any rate, after his death, his son, on going to the envelope in which the letters had been kept, found it empty and is said to have expressed the conviction that his father had burnt them for fear the erased passages might one day be deciphered.<sup>2</sup> This extraordinary action gave a further handle to the Queen's enemies, who did not hesitate to declare that the Baron had

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 308-310. Footnote by La Rocheterie.

<sup>2</sup> A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 377.

destroyed evidence against her, but such a suggestion is definitely refuted by his letter to M. de la Rocheterie assuring him that the papers of Fersen contained 'nothing that could throw a shadow on the conduct of the Queen.' As a man of honour, such as we must conclude the Baron to have been, he could not have written these words if he had read anything compromising in the letters, but he may not have felt so certain about the passages he was unable to read. Without any departure from the truth he could offer hypotheses as to what the erasures concealed, whilst admitting to himself the possibility that they were words of love which might one day be deciphered and published to the world. Apart from this danger there was the risk of the papers being tampered with. For to no one have so many spurious letters been attributed as to Marie Antoinette, and nothing would have been easier for a clever forger, left alone with the collection, than to add words or passages in her handwriting. The Queen herself was afraid of this, for in one of her letters she says to Fersen: 'I do not want anything in my writing to go through the post. It is so easy to imitate it and to add something to a letter, that one must take great precautions.'<sup>1</sup> And on another occasion she says she has reason to suspect it has been imitated. The Baron, determined that no bad use should be made of the letters, may thus have decided that the best place for them was the fire. On the other hand, he may have had quite another reason, unconnected with Marie Antoinette, for destroying them, as we shall see later.

The Queen's enemies did not, however, give up all hope of finding some evidence against her amongst Fersen's papers. In 1907, five years after the death of the Baron, who published the correspondence, a certain M. Lucien Maury, a lecturer at the University of Upsala, who had been given permission to search in the Archives of Stafsund, announced that he had found an unsigned letter there from Marie Antoinette to Fersen which had escaped the con-

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 173.

flagration. An extract from this was published in the *Revue Bleue* for April 27, 1907, and contains the words:

'I can therefore tell you that I love you and I have only the time for that. . . . Good-bye, the most loved and the most loving of men. I embrace you with my whole heart.'

Was this at last the documentary evidence for which the antagonists of Marie Antoinette had been waiting so long? Hitherto not one line in her writing had ever been discovered showing that she loved Fersen. Had that essential proof now been brought to light? Unfortunately, however, for her accusers, the evidence broke down on the most important point—the letter was not in her writing, but only in her cipher!

It is certainly unlikely that Marie Antoinette, or any woman in ordinary circumstances, would employ a third person to write a letter of this compromising character; we cannot therefore suppose that she dictated it. According to a more recent investigator the copy appears to have been made by Fersen.<sup>1</sup> If so, why in cipher? If it had been *en clair* it would be comprehensible, for Fersen would naturally decode a cipher letter into ordinary writing, and the copy in this form might inadvertently have been left among his papers and escaped the attention of Baron de Klinckowström. But what possible object could Fersen have in making a copy of it in cipher? That hypothesis is quite untenable. The only explanations seem to be that either the letter was from another woman who had managed to get hold of the Queen's cipher, or that someone who had had access to the documents, anxious to provide incriminating evidence against the Queen, but not venturing to imitate her handwriting, had written this in her cipher and slipped it in among the rest. This was possibly just the sort of trickery the Baron had wished to guard against when destroying the letters.

<sup>1</sup> 'Klinckowström probably took it for a letter of Fersen's, since it is not in the hand of Marie Antoinette but only in her cipher.' A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 201, note.

M. Lucien Maury's assurances of the genuineness of this document would carry greater weight if he himself had appeared to be an impartial investigator, but in his account of how he made his great discovery, he refers to the Baron de Klinckowström as 'an obstinate defender of the Queen's memory,' and is obviously out to find evidence against her. Moreover, in the column of the *Revue Bleue* edited under his auspices, where the question of this letter was again discussed on October 1, 1910, M. Ernest Tissot was not only allowed to repeat the discredited testimony of Lord Holland, but to add this infamous phrase: 'Fersen certainly spent the night of the 5th to the 6th of October 1792 (!!!) with the unhappy woman, but Mme Campan, who was present, finished sewing the disguise of the handsome messenger.'

This ludicrous error of date, even more glaring than Lord Holland's, on which Croker commented, will serve to show the erudition of the investigators on whose authority we are asked to accept the genuineness of the famous letter. M. Henri Welschinger did not hesitate to suggest that it was a 'fragment apocryphe,'<sup>1</sup> giving reasons for his suspicions, which must be reserved for a later chapter where the fragment in question will be given in full at the date assigned to it by M. Lucien Maury—September 1791.

In studying the relations of Fersen and Marie Antoinette, we must have recourse not only to the letters that have passed between them but to the private Journal of Fersen, published in the form of extracts by Baron de Klinckowström. Unfortunately these only begin in June 1791, for the Journals he had kept from 1780 until that later date were said to have been burnt by a friend of his, out of consideration for his safety when he left Paris on the flight to Varennes. In an entry for April 5, 1795, published in a more recent work, Fersen refers to these earlier notes, observing: 'I shall always regret those that poor Frantz burnt in Paris. They would have been of value to me and

<sup>1</sup> Article on *Marie Antoinette et le Comte de Fersen* in the *Journal des Débats* for September 13, 1907.

to the history of the Revolution.’<sup>1</sup> In this case, then, there can be no question of Fersen having destroyed evidence that could damage the reputation of the Queen.

M. Lenotre, however, in his book on the flight to Varennes, makes the surprising statement that, after all, these notes were not destroyed, but were handed down through Fersen’s illegitimate offspring—for he never married—to a certain Baron de F. A., ‘the only descendant of Fersen,’ who inherited ‘the largest portion of his papers, notably the fraction of his Journal from 1780 to June 1791, which Fersen himself believed to be lost.’ That this also contained nothing compromising to Marie Antoinette is evident, for M. Lenotre goes on to say: ‘The Baron de F. A. writes: “I affirm that the Comte (de Fersen) was never anything but the most loyal and respectful confidant of the Queen of France.”’<sup>2</sup>

The same opinion was expressed by the Duchesse de FitzJames, daughter of the Comte de Loewenhjelm and a great-niece of Fersen’s, who, on the occasion of the centenary of Marie Antoinette’s death, devoted an article to this question in which she said: ‘I desire first of all to do away with the lying legend, based on a calumny, which distorted the relations between Marie Antoinette and Fersen, relations consisting in absolute devotion, in complete abnegation on the one side, and on the other in friendship, profound, trusting and grateful. People have wished to degrade to the vulgarities of a love novel, facts which were otherwise terrible, sentiments which were otherwise lofty.’<sup>3</sup>

Some twelve years after the death of the Baron de Klinckowström a fresh discovery was made in Sweden, where it was found that, although the originals of the letters from Marie Antoinette to Fersen which the Baron inherited from his grandmother, a sister of Fersen’s, and which were kept at Stafsund, had disappeared, a further collection of Fersen’s papers had been deposited with his other sister,

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Drame de Varennes* (1921), p. 9, note.

<sup>3</sup> Article *Marie Antoinette et le Comte de Fersen* in *La Vie Contemporaine* for October 1893.



Sophie Piper, and were still in the possession of her granddaughter, the Comtesse Sophie Nordenfalk, at the Château of Löfstad. These included a series of letters which passed between Marie Antoinette and Barnave; here was also Fersen's correspondence with his sister Sophie. In 1913, a Swede, M. de Heidenstam, published selections from both in a book entitled *Marie Antoinette, Fersen et Barnave*, which at first created a sensation. For in the letters to Sophie, whom alone Fersen made his confidante in the matter, there appeared at last to be documentary evidence of the tender relations existing between him and Marie Antoinette, although in this connection he never mentions her by name, referring to her only as 'elle.' M. de Heidenstam, however, far from being an enemy of the Queen, entertained a chivalrous respect for her memory, and saw in all this merely an idyllic love affair which had never passed the bounds of strict morality. Thus he writes:

'A chivalrous love as deep as it was ideal and disinterested, a boundless devotion made of tenderness and admiration, compassion for undeserved misfortunes, for sufferings bravely borne, this is what these letters of Fersen to his sister about Marie Antoinette reveal. . . . For him she wore an aureole around her brow. For her he was the chevalier sans peur et sans reproche.'

M. de Heidenstam's book indeed appeared to be more the work of a romancer than of a serious historian; the letters to Sophie, introduced in a fragmentary form, were arranged with so little regard for dates or method as to be almost unintelligible. Meanwhile, the authenticity of the Barnave correspondence was disputed, so that in the end the book came to be regarded as of doubtful historic value. It was not until some seventeen years later that the Barnave correspondence was pronounced by experts of the École de Chartres to be genuine.<sup>1</sup> The Löfstad papers were then republished by Mlle Alma Söderhjelm, a professor at the University of Abö in Finland, who brought them out in two

<sup>1</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* for February 7, 1935.

separate volumes: *Fersen et Marie Antoinette: Journal Intime et Correspondance du Comte Axel de Fersen* in 1930 and *Marie Antoinette et Barnave* in 1934. The latter, well edited, was a valuable contribution to history; unfortunately in the former Mlle Söderhjelm allowed her personal bias to obscure her judgement and to intersperse the really interesting documents at her disposal with the most unconvincing comments in order to make out a case against Marie Antoinette. Amidst loud professions of impartiality she set out with the fixed purpose of proving that 'Marie Antoinette was the mistress of Fersen' and had been in love with him from the moment of their first meeting. Statements to this effect occur incessantly throughout her book, at the end of paragraphs containing no proof whatever of any such hypotheses. Although displaying greater method than M. de Heidenstam in the arrangement of her material, her habit of jumping at conclusions and total disregard for the necessity of weighing the value of evidence make it impossible to regard her as a more scientific investigator. No libel on the Queen's character is too base for her to reproduce; she even has recourse to the old story attributed by O'Meara and Lord Holland to Mme Campan, refuted a hundred years ago, whilst the *Mémoires* of the Comte de Saint-Priest recur triumphantly at every juncture.

Mlle Söderhjelm's trump card is, of course, Fersen's correspondence with his sister Sophie where, like M. de Heidenstam, she takes it for granted that in speaking of the woman he loves and by whom he is loved, Fersen alludes to Marie Antoinette. That M. de Heidenstam, seeing only the ideal romance between these two, and Marie Antoinette as the sole object of Fersen's devotion, should have reached this conclusion in all good faith is comprehensible, but Mlle Söderhjelm is under no illusions with regard to Fersen. She knows and has made it clear throughout her book that Fersen was extremely *volage*, for his *Journal*, to which M. de Heidenstam apparently did not have access, is full of references to the women who love him and with whom he is more

or less in love. Amongst the former we find no other than Mme de Saint-Priest, whose letters to Fersen are reproduced by Mlle Söderhjelm and who, as their editress informs us, 'pursued him with her declarations of love' <sup>1</sup>—a fact which may perhaps provide a further reason for Saint-Priest's rancour towards Marie Antoinette and Fersen.

Saint-Priest's animosity towards Marie Antoinette was not shared by his wife, who, in one of these letters, tells Fersen she has had a dispute with her husband about Fersen's conduct which he regards as compromising to the Queen, and she goes on to say: 'I look at the matter very differently and I think that at the moment you cannot show her too much attachment. . . . And what is blamed and thought wrong on your part, I think sublime and I can only respect you the more for it. I am too much attached to you and to her to be able to think differently.' <sup>2</sup> It is certainly difficult to imagine that Mme de Saint-Priest would have written in this way if she had believed there was any truth in her husband's suspicions and that the Queen was therefore her rival in Fersen's affections. No, all her jealousy is reserved for another woman who stood in a very different relationship to Fersen than the Queen to whose service he had dedicated himself.

For it appears that at the very moment when Fersen is supposed to have been engaged in an amorous intrigue with Marie Antoinette he had a mistress, Mrs. Sullivan, in Paris. This important point, revealed a hundred years ago in the *Mémoires* of the Comte d'Hézécques, seems to have been overlooked by M. de Heidenstam but is clearly brought out by Mlle Söderhjelm who, through her researches amongst Fersen's papers, is able to follow the course of the whole affair. The story is as follows:

Anna Eleonora Franchi, the daughter of an Italian tailor,

<sup>1</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 171. These letters were previously published by Eugène Bimbenet in his *Fuite de Louis XVI à Varennes*, p. 131, as from an unknown woman; it is Mlle Soderhjelm who has succeeded in tracing them to Mme de Saint-Priest.

<sup>2</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 173.

who combined this profession with dancing at the Milan theatre, started life in the ballet of a travelling troupe. After an early marriage to a dancer named Martini she became the mistress of the Duke of Würtemberg, by whom she had three children. One of her daughters married the Comte d'Orsay and became the mother of the famous 'beau d'Orsay,' friend of Lady Blessington. The Duke's passion cooled in time and Eleonora returned to her wandering life. Various adventures followed, including a brief liaison with the Emperor Joseph II; later on, having fallen on evil days, she captured the heart of an Irishman named Stephen Sullivan, belonging to the family of that name then prominent in the East India Company. Sullivan married her and took her out to India, where another member of the same Company fell in love with her.<sup>1</sup>

This was the famous Quintin Craufurd, born at Kilwinnock in 1743, younger brother of Sir Alexander Craufurd (1st Baronet). At the age of eighteen Quintin entered the service of the East India Company, and by the time the lovely Italian appeared on the scene he had made a large fortune on which he was able to retire. Before doing so he persuaded Eleonora to leave her husband and in 1780 carried her off with him to Paris. Here, as *littérateur* and art collector, Craufurd soon made his way in society and was presented to the Queen by his friend Lord Strathavon; thus the foundation was laid for the confidence Marie Antoinette was to place in him during the stormy days of the Revolution.

When that time came Craufurd threw himself ardently into politics and played a not unimportant part behind the scenes, corresponding with British Ministers and making journeys to London in order to enlist their support for schemes on behalf of the royal family of France. In these he was ably seconded by Mrs. Sullivan, with whom he continued to live in illicit union, for it was not until 1802 that he made her his lawful wife.

<sup>1</sup> Gustave Bord, *Autour du Temple* (1912), ii. 62.

Meanwhile, Eleonora had lost her heart, at least temporarily, to a lover far more attractive than the middle-aged Indian nabob, who had taken her under his protection, but whose moods and eccentricities caused her many tears. It is not known at what date she first met Fersen or when her liaison with him began, but it is evident that from 1789 onwards, and perhaps earlier, the two men shared the lady, though how far Craufurd was aware of this we are also not told. The ménage à trois, bound together by a common devotion to the royal family and particularly to the Queen, had often occasion to meet in order to discuss plans of rescue; Fersen thus had the entrée to the house in the Rue de Clichy for an ostensible purpose, but he was also in the habit of entering it when its master was away or even, as we shall see later, by a back way when he was present, for clandestine meetings with Mrs. Sullivan, whom he speaks of as 'mon Éléonore.'

This was the woman whom Mme de Saint-Priest regarded as her rival in Fersen's affections, and in a letter from London she takes pleasure in telling him she has heard the Prince of Wales refer to Mrs. Sullivan in far from flattering terms, comparing her to an apple-woman.<sup>1</sup>

The episode of Mrs. Sullivan certainly detracts from the romance woven around Marie Antoinette and Fersen by M. de Heidenstam. At the same time it greatly complicates the task of following Fersen's career in his Journal and letters. For owing to his use of pronouns instead of proper names, it is often difficult to know to whom he is alluding. Mlle Söderhjelm lays down the rule that 'Elle' stands for the Queen. 'For Fersen,' she says, 'Marie Antoinette always remained "Elle," which must not be confused with "El."—as he calls Éléonore Sullivan—or with other women, whatever his relations with them might be.'<sup>2</sup> This word, which in normal times might seem significant of affection,

<sup>1</sup> ' . . . il ne nous fit pas l'éloge de Mad. Sulivan qu'il traita de marchande de pommes et dont il fit des détails peu agréables.' A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 321.

was then essentially a matter of precaution. In the perilous days when Fersen wrote, it was unsafe to speak of anyone, least of all public characters, by name; thus in his letters his father is referred to as 'notre vieux' and Gustavus III as 'notre homme.' Madame Elisabeth, whose correspondence was of a much less secret nature than Fersen's, had a whole series of pseudonyms for use in writing to her friends. That Fersen should have referred to Marie Antoinette as 'Elle,' spelling it with a capital since she was Queen, is therefore nothing extraordinary; Mirabeau in fact did exactly the same.<sup>1</sup> In laying down this rule Mlle Söderhjelm seems certainly to be right. But she goes completely wrong when she proceeds to lay down another. 'Up till 1789,' she writes, 'Fersen had called Marie Antoinette "Elle"; from 1789 to 1790 he calls her "mon amie," after 1791 he calls her alternatively "Elle" and "la Reine,"'<sup>2</sup> and from this point Mlle Söderhjelm loses her first rule to sight and on several occasions arbitrarily assumes that 'elle' stands for the Queen though not spelt with a capital. Let us see how this plan works out when applied to the famous letters to Sophie where Fersen speaks of the woman he loves and on which M. de Heidenstam built up his romance. These letters, scattered at random throughout M. de Heidenstam's book, were carefully collated by Mlle Söderhjelm and placed in what certainly appears to be their right order of date, in the spring of 1790, forming a consecutive series and clearly all relating to the same woman.

Mlle Söderhjelm prefaces them with the remark: 'it is only in his correspondence with his sister that he (Fersen) dared to give free rein to his feelings for the Queen.'<sup>3</sup> These feelings are shown in the following passages taken from each letter of the series:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Il serait essentiel que je visse votre homme et bientôt Elle. . . .' Letter from Mirabeau to La Marck with editor's note: 'La reine Marie Antoinette, qu'alors Mirabeau n'avait point encore vue.' *Mirabeau et La Marck*, i. 343.

<sup>2</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-155. In view of the importance of these extracts I have given them in the original French in the Appendix.

April 4, 1790. My dear friend, I have received yours of the 5th and thank you for it and for what you say about my friend (*mon amie*). Do believe me, my dear Sophie, that she deserves all the feeling you can have for her, she is the most perfect creature that I know and her behaviour which is the same has won everyone and I hear her praises everywhere. You can judge how pleased I am.

April 10, 1790. I begin to be a little happier for I see my friend from time to time freely at home (*chez elle*) and that comforts us a little for all the ills from which she is suffering, poor woman; she is an angel for conduct, courage and feeling, never has anyone known how to love like that. She is very much touched by all you have said of her to me and has wept bitterly and she wishes me to tell you how much she has been touched, she would be so happy to see you sometimes. She imagines that if our plan succeeds you might then come here, and that idea makes her very happy, in fact it might be possible then.

May 7, 1790. She thinks much of you, she was touched to tears by all you say of her to me, when one is unhappy one is all the more easily affected, especially when one has such a beautiful soul. Poor woman, she deserved a better fate (*elle méritait autre chose*), perhaps one day it will be made up to her.

May 31, 1790. She is extremely unhappy, but very brave, she is an angel. I have given her all your messages and that gave her pleasure. I try to console her as much as I can, I owe it to her. She is so perfect towards me.

It is certainly surprising to find Fersen writing in this way of Marie Antoinette to whom, in his letters published hitherto, he never refers except in the most respectful terms as '*la Reine*,' '*cette malheureuse princesse*,' etc., and it seems still more odd that the Queen of France, still Queen in name and surrounded by all those members of her Court who had not emigrated, should be so overjoyed at Sophie's kind messages. Mlle Söderhjelm can only explain it by asking (p. 388): 'Would the Queen of France have had such

feelings for Sophie and have taken so much interest in her private affairs, her cares and troubles if she had not been the mistress of Axel?'!!!

Passing over this extraordinary argument let us now see whether it was the Queen of France who took so much interest in Sophie.

On June 28, 1790, Fersen writes again:

'The King and Queen are very unhappy and they do not deserve it. The nobility and clergy are destroyed; in fact everywhere one only meets people who have been ruined and lost their position in life. She also is very unhappy, poor woman——'

Why 'also?' He has only just said the Queen is unhappy, how can he still be speaking of her? Fersen continues:

'her courage is above everything and makes her still more interesting. She is very much touched by all you say of her, never has anyone deserved it more or been more perfect. My only grief is not to be able to comfort her entirely for her troubles and not to make her as happy as she deserves to be. It is from her in the country that I write to you (*C'est de chez elle à la campagne que je vous écris*).'

Then after giving news of his regiment, Fersen goes on to say:

'The King and the royal family are at Saint-Cloud; they are much better off there than in Paris and freer, as they can walk about as much as they like. No one goes there but those in attendance (*le service*) and I have not been there.'

The King and Queen and their family had in fact, as we know, been allowed to go to Saint-Cloud for the summer on June 11, and *Fersen had not been there*—a fact which incidentally tends to refute Saint-Priest's story of his nocturnal visits to the Queen. For subsequent letters show him to be occupied with the same 'elle' throughout the whole course of that summer and never once, in his most confidential letters to Sophie or Taube, does he speak of going to Saint-Cloud.



It is perfectly clear then that when he said: '*C'est de chez elle à la campagne que je vous écris,*' he was writing from the house of some woman in the country—who, we cannot tell, but most probably his mistress, Mrs. Sullivan. At any rate, since these letters all clearly relate to the same woman it is obvious that it cannot be the Queen in any of them and that the perfect angel who had wept with Fersen over her troubles and Sophie's was indeed, as might have been supposed, a woman of a very different fibre and social position. Moreover, in view of the capital error committed here by Mlle Söderhjelm, we cannot accept her assurances that '*elle*' refers to the Queen in letters written by Fersen at other dates when there is no evidence to prove it. And certainly we shall never find him referring to her as '*mon amie*.'

This point is of the utmost importance, for it is these letters to Sophie which, since they have been republished by Mlle Söderhjelm, have given a fresh impetus to the campaign against Marie Antoinette. The pseudo-historical books about her which have appeared recently are all built up on the false foundations laid first by M. de Heidenstam and later by Mlle Söderhjelm, whose show of documentation has not only facilitated the task of the Queen's detractors, but has led serious writers who had hitherto proclaimed her innocence to regard it as an open question. How is it possible they could be so deceived? It is true that only twelve words in the last letter quoted above reveal the mistake that has been made—'*c'est de chez elle à la campagne que je vous écris*'—yet why have they passed unnoticed? And how can Mlle Söderhjelm herself have failed to see that they gave the lie to her whole theory?

Indeed, at the end of her book, she herself admits that she has not proved her point. For although at intervals throughout 390 pages she assumes Fersen to be the lover of the Queen and the Queen to be the mistress of Fersen, she heads a concluding chapter with the words: '*Was Fersen the lover of Marie Antoinette?*' and after advancing further

unconvincing arguments to show that he was, she ends by saying: 'It is impossible for us to reply in an absolutely affirmative manner to the question we asked at the beginning of this chapter for want of definite proof.'<sup>1</sup> Just so; not a single proof has been produced after all.

In the light of Mlle Soderhjelm's revelations we must, however, admit that the great romance described by M. de Heidenstam was not quite the idyll he imagined. For if she has not succeeded in tearing the aureole from the head of Marie Antoinette, she has certainly dimmed the halo that surrounded that of Fersen. The letters to Sophie are not her only source of information on Fersen's love affairs; she has also come upon his private Journal, preserved at Stafund, from which she gives extracts differing essentially in many places from the text published by the Baron de Klinckowström, who, if Mlle Söderhjelm's version is the correct one, suppressed passages discreditable, not to the Queen, but to Fersen. Thus all references to his liaison with Mrs. Sullivan are omitted by him, and when Mlle Söderhjelm tells us that not only were the letters of Marie Antoinette destroyed, but that all those written to him by Mrs. Sullivan were burnt also 'out of respect to his memory,'<sup>2</sup> it seems evident that the bonfires made in Sweden were not lit solely with a view to safeguarding the reputation of Marie Antoinette. If, as seems probable, concern for the family honour was the motive, we cannot help wondering why the Journal was not added to the blaze and still more why the descendants of the Fersens should have confided it to the iconoclastic hands of Mlle Söderhjelm. For some of the extracts published by her do the family hero little credit; we see him here no longer as the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, but as a vain and rather foolish person, stealing his friend's mistress and preening himself on his successes with women only fifteen months after the death of the Queen. Indeed, in the construction Mlle Söderhjelm places on certain passages, she deprives him of the one sentiment

<sup>1</sup> p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 198.

that does him honour—a chivalrous respect for the Queen, and she even goes so far as to insinuate that when the monstrous story reached him of her having formed a liaison with Barnave, he entertained so poor an opinion of her morality as to think it not impossible. Further, when told that he himself was said to be her lover, he did not even trouble to protest.<sup>1</sup> Was Fersen then another Lauzun, not ill-pleased at being supposed to have achieved this distinction? In this case did some of the stories to that effect emanate from himself? But then why should he have taken such pains to block out amorous passages in her letters to him? If Mlle Söderhjelm's estimate of him is right those are the very passages he would have been most anxious to preserve.

Mlle Söderhjelm herself quite recognizes this discrepancy and proceeds to develop an ingenious theory. Since, she says, 'Fersen did not care that Europe regarded him as the lover of Marie Antoinette'—incidentally a quite untrue statement of European opinion—therefore Fersen was not the author of the erasures, and she goes on to point out that these had only been made in the documents at Stafsund and not in those of Löfstad, hence she insinuates they may be attributed to the Klinckowströms<sup>2</sup>—presumably to the Baron who lit the bonfire. But such a conclusion would show him to have been a liar, since he distinctly stated in his letter to M. de la Rocheterie that they were made by Fersen. It is true that, always assuming Mlle Söderhjelm's version of the private Journal to be the correct one, the Baron certainly did alter passages that tended to the discredit of Fersen, as we shall see later in the case of a very important episode in his career. But this is a very different matter from committing a lie to paper in correspondence with so distinguished an historian as M. de la Rocheterie, and we find it easier to believe the simple explanation of the erasures that the Baron himself advanced, namely that they contained political secrets which Fersen himself deleted.

<sup>1</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379.

As to the construction Mlle Söderhjelm places on certain passages in the Journal, we need not follow her into her far-fetched surmises. We cannot believe that Fersen was quite the cad she makes him appear; his letters to Marie Antoinette speak for themselves. For neither here nor in those of his other writings brought to light by Mlle Söderhjelm do we find one word disrespectful to the Queen.

One cannot but regret that these fresh documents, so important to a study of the Revolution, should not have been entrusted for publication to an impartial investigator, instead of one with a *parti pris*. The real evidence they may provide of the innocence of the relations between Marie Antoinette and Fersen cannot be judged until they have been submitted to advocates for her defence. What court of law would form a verdict on documents to which only the counsel for the prosecution had had access? And who knows what passages may have been omitted from the published text which, like the twelve words in the letter of June 28, 1790, would show still further the misconstruction that has been placed on them? It is interesting to note that the late M. Lenotre, after all the latest aspersions on the character of Marie Antoinette had been published, said just before his death in 1935 that he still did not believe in the guilt of the Queen.<sup>1</sup>

What then must be our verdict on the question of Fersen in the light of our present knowledge? That, if the recently discovered documents are all genuine, he was not quite the hero he has been represented, but that vain and volage as he may have been, he never faltered in his respect for Marie Antoinette, never flagged in her service, and if perhaps he loved her as a woman, it was with a very different love from that which he gave Éléonore Sullivan. For to him she was always the Queen, the Queen who had made him her

<sup>1</sup> Letter from a friend of M. Lenotre to present writer, date of March 14, 1935: 'Monsieur G. Lenotre, lui, avant sa mort, me disait qu'il ne croyait pas à la culpabilité de la Reine.'

confidant, who had honoured him with her friendship, for whom he was ready to risk his life at any moment. If not without reproach he was nevertheless a *chevalier sans peur*, whole-hearted and untiring in his efforts to save her and her family from the hideous fate that awaited them.

And Marie Antoinette? Undoubtedly she was deeply attached to Fersen as a faithful and devoted friend, the one man she felt she could trust after all others had failed her. More than this, she was fond of him with an affection born of gratitude for his devotion and tinged perhaps with the *coquetterie* of a woman accustomed to homage. So much we can conclude with certainty.

It is, however, not impossible that amidst the stress and storm of the Revolution, in her loneliness and perplexity, unable to lean on the King, at variance politically with Madame Elisabeth, betrayed on all sides, she may have come to love the man who was devoting all his energies to the hope of saving her and those dear to her, to love him with tenderness rather than with passion and without a thought of disloyalty to the husband for whom she, in her turn, was ready to shed the last drop of her blood. But this is a thousand miles from supposing that she ever stooped to conduct incompatible with her virtue as a woman or with her dignity as Queen of France.

## CHAPTER VII

### PLANS FOR FLIGHT

It was seen in the last chapter that after the royal family had been brought to Paris, Fersen, from October 1789 onwards, acted as intermediary between the Kings of France and Sweden, and he was often at the Tuileries, where he held long conversations on the political situation with the King and Queen.

Fersen's affection for Louis XVI is clearly shown throughout his Journal and letters, and tends still further to disprove the theory that his relations with Marie Antoinette were of an illicit kind. For not only would Louis XVI have been unlikely in this event to have encouraged his visits, but Fersen would have been unlikely to care for Louis XVI. It is human nature to feel resentment towards those whom one has wronged. Fersen, however, in speaking of the King and Queen, always couples them together as the royal pair who have honoured him with their confidence and whom he would sacrifice his life to save. Thus in February 1791, writing to his father to explain why he is remaining in Paris, he says:

'My position is different from that of everyone. I have always been treated with kindness and distinction in this country, by the Ministers and by the King and Queen. Your reputation and your services have been my passport and my recommendation; perhaps a wise, careful and discreet behaviour have won me the approbation and the esteem of some, and also a certain success. I am attached to the King and Queen and I owe it to them for the kindness they showed me when they were able, and I should be vile and ungrateful if I deserted them now that they can do

nothing for me and I have the hope of being useful to them. To all the kindness they have heaped on me they have now added a flattering distinction: that of confidence, the more so since it is extremely limited and confined to three or four persons, of which I am the youngest. If we can serve them, what a pleasure it will be to me to repay some of the obligations I owe them, how deeply it will rejoice my heart to have been able to contribute to their happiness!'<sup>1</sup>

It is in this vein that to the end of their lives Fersen writes of them in his private Journal, and, as we shall see later, the King's death affected him almost as deeply as the Queen's. Fersen indeed seems to have been one of the few people who understood Louis XVI and, whilst frequently deploring his want of resolution, appreciated him at his true worth.

Like Mirabeau, Fersen realized that the only hope for the royal family lay in escape from Paris, and by the autumn of 1790 the King and Queen had reached the same conclusion. From that moment plans for carrying out this scheme were constantly discussed in secret at the Tuileries, and Fersen became more than ever the confidant of the Queen. It was he who ciphered and dispatched her letters, and received and deciphered those that reached her from abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately Mirabeau's first idea of flight to Normandy or Brittany was not adopted. By seeking refuge with the Normans, of whose loyalty Louis XVI had been able to judge during his visit to Cherbourg in 1786, or with the equally loyal Bretons, all suspicion of collusion with foreign Powers would have been avoided and the King would have owed his salvation to the voluntary support of his subjects. How readily they would have rallied round him was seen later in the war of La Vendée—the only spontaneous rising of the people that took place throughout the whole Revolution. If only he had placed himself at the head of these loyal bands his victory might have been assured.

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. p. lix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. p. lviii.

But Louis XVI distrusted Rochambeau, in command of the army in the North, whom he suspected of having brought republican ideas back from America, whilst on the other hand he entirely trusted the Marquis de Bouillé, who was commanding at Metz. It was Bouillé who, in November 1790, whilst expressing his doubts as to the success of the venture, proposed either Montmédy, Besançon, or Valenciennes as the place of refuge. The King then made the fatal choice of Montmédy, which was 70 leagues—about 194 English miles—from Paris and had the advantage of being very near the frontier, also of being small but well fortified.

It will be seen then that, from the beginning, there was never any question of the King leaving France; all he desired was safety for himself and his family and freedom to parley with the nation on the form of government to be adopted. The plan was briefly this: once at Montmédy, the King was to rally his loyal subjects round him, recall the émigrés and address a Manifesto to the country protesting against the tyranny of the Assembly, saying that he was determined to meet the wishes of the people as expressed in the *cahiers* of 1789 and going back to the principles he had set forth at the Séance Royale on June 23 of that year. Not for a moment did he contemplate a return to absolute monarchy, but he did desire to be released from sanctions he had been forced to give to decrees, such as the civil constitution of the clergy, under threats of death to himself and his family.

Marie Antoinette, whilst insisting more on the respect that should be paid to the person of the King than he did himself, and more resolved to uphold the dignity of the throne, identified herself with his views on the policy to be adopted and disassociated herself entirely from the retrogressive projects of the Comte d'Artois and his party. The breach that had arisen between them over the double representation of the Tiers État had never been healed, and to the princes and the émigrés of Coblenz she became anathema



owing to her supposed 'democracy.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the Prince de Condé wrote in February 1791: 'The Comte d'Artois has received letters from the King and Queen . . . the Queen's is even weaker than the King's. After all the bad reasons you can imagine she asks him *to sacrifice all idea of counter-revolution*. That is the woman whom La Queille and so many others represent as a model of energy.'<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Marie Antoinette strongly supported the plan of flight from Paris and favoured the choice of Montmédy because she saw safety only in a town near the frontier where, if necessary, Austrian troops could come to the rescue of the royal family. The way in which the flight was to be carried out is clearly explained in her letters to Mercy during January and February 1791. On February 3 she writes that the Marquis de Bouillé, in command of the troops in the East of France, has proposed Montmédy as their final destination because it is well fortified and from there it will be easy to communicate with Luxembourg. Bouillé is to collect troops and munitions of war under the pretext of precautions against the panic inspired by the Austrians; in reality to act as a guard to the royal family. 'All the troops in that neighbourhood are good and well disposed. He [Bouillé] cannot answer for it but he thinks the presence of the King will quickly bring others over to him. In view of these considerations we have decided on Montmédy, and if circumstances forced us to leave that frontier we could always retire with our troops to the Swiss frontier by way of Alsace. As to our flight, it will take place by night. We shall go straight with our children and our one carriage to our place of retreat; Monsieur, Madame and Eli [Madame Elisabeth] will start together from the Luxembourg and will join us by the road to Valenciennes. Mme de Tourzel and either M. de Brissac or de Villequier will go with us in our carriage. M. de Briges will act as courier. As the success of the plan depends on secrecy, no one has been told of it,

<sup>1</sup> Rocheterie, ii. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Émigration: Coblenz* (1889), p. 33.

not even these gentlemen. They will only be told at the moment of starting. We have a carriage which does not belong to us and is not known to our servants: we shall confide in none of them.' <sup>1</sup>

There were in fact only four people in the secret besides Mercy and de Bouillé—the eldest son of de Bouillé, the Marquis de Bombelles, the Comte de Breteuil, and, last but not least, Fersen, who was making all the arrangements for the escape of the royal family from Paris as far as Châlons.

The flight was planned to take place early in May, but as the King had not yet entirely recovered from his illness it was decided that on April 18 he should go with his family to spend Easter at Saint-Cloud, where he would be able to breathe fresher air and take the exercise of which he had been deprived all through the winter; but the rumour went round that this was only a feint to cover a plan of escape. That it was nothing of the kind is seen by the letter Marie Antoinette wrote to Mercy four days earlier where she still speaks of the plan of flight from Paris which is only to be undertaken when the necessary support has been promised by the Emperor, who so far had shown little zeal in the matter of rescuing his sister. Thus on April 14 Marie Antoinette writes to Mercy: 'If we can succeed in getting out of Paris and reaching a fortified town and we were to call from there for the help of the Emperor on our frontiers, can we count on it, yes or no? Without this preliminary assurance nothing can be undertaken here. But, to explain myself still more clearly, we ask no Power (unless in the case of an urgent event) to send troops into this country. We only wish that at the moment when we might need to call for them, we can be assured that the Powers will have troops on their frontiers bordering France, in sufficient numbers to act as a support and a rallying point for all well-intentioned and dissatisfied people who wish to join us but who could not reach us owing to their being too far away or to other causes.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 231.

This letter definitely disposes of the idea that the Queen contemplated any invasion of France by foreign troops for the purpose of putting down the Revolution; her only thought was that they should stand by on the frontier to ensure the safety of the royal family. There was also no question of making the flight from Saint-Cloud.

On the morning of April 18, however, an immense crowd collected at the Tuileries to prevent Louis XVI from starting for that destination. This was no popular rising; the real feelings of the people had been shown a few weeks earlier in their rejoicings at the King's recovery from his illness; the whole affair had been planned the night before at the Club des Cordeliers controlled by the Orléanistes. For the first time since the return of the Duc from England his supporters were able to bring off a successful *coup* against the King. Amongst his principal agents on this occasion were the Marquis de Sillery, Laclos, Saint Huruge and above all Danton, who at his trial three years later boasted that it was he who had prevented the King from starting for Saint-Cloud. Rotondo made the round of the cafés, stirring up agitation. Added to these conspirators was the agent of the King of Prussia, known as 'le juif Ephraïm,' who had distributed 600,000 francs to the leaders.

At half-past eleven the King and Queen, after attending mass, waited with their children, Madame Elisabeth and Mme de Tourzel at the door of the Tuileries for their carriages. But these had been stopped by the crowd. The Queen then proposed they should get into a berline that had been able to enter the Cour des Princes. Accordingly all six took their places in the berline, but the National Guards, won over by the conspirators, refused to open the gates for them to pass out into the Carrousel. In vain Bailly and La Fayette endeavoured to overcome their resistance; as usual those who had encouraged the spirit of insurrection in the past were unable to quell it. The King then, putting his head out of the carriage window, said: 'It would be surprising if after having given liberty to the nation I should

not be free myself.' The crowd responded by a hail of invectives, calling him a 'f— aristocrat, a b— aristocrat, a fat pig,' crying out that he was incapable of reigning and that he must be deposed in favour of the Duc d'Orléans. The King's attendants surrounding his carriage were dragged away with violence, one, M. de Duras, first gentleman of the bedchamber, was so roughly handled that the little Dauphin, who had shown no sign of fear up to this moment, burst into tears, crying out with all his might: 'Save him, save him then!'

La Fayette asked Bailly to proclaim martial law by hoisting the red flag; Bailly refused. Then La Fayette offered to force a passage through the crowd with his troops if the King would give the order. Louis XVI replied hotly: 'It is for you, monsieur, to see what you ought to do in order to carry out your Constitution!'

But it was evident that La Fayette had now little control over his men and that further resistance would endanger the lives of the King and defenders. The frightful scene had already lasted more than two hours. Louis XVI then said to La Fayette: 'I do not wish any blood to be shed for me; when I have gone you will be at liberty to use any means you wish to make the law respected.'

Therewith he ordered the berline to be turned back towards the Château. As the royal family descended from it the soldiers gathered round them and a few were heard to say: 'Yes, we will defend you.' But the Queen, looking them proudly in the eye, said: 'Yes, we count on that, but you will now admit that we are not free.' Then taking the Dauphin in her arms, she re-entered the Château, followed by Madame Elisabeth holding Madame Royale by the hand.

The Princesse de Chimay came forward in tears and gave the Queen her arm to lead her into her apartment. 'It is not the moment to weep but to show courage,' said Marie Antoinette, 'and I shall set you the example.'

But the affair had strengthened her conviction of the necessity for flight. 'The event which has just taken place,'

she wrote to Mercy two days later, ' confirms us more than ever in our projects. The guard surrounding us is the most threatening of all. Our lives are not even safe. . . . Our position is frightful; it is absolutely necessary to put an end to it next month. The King wishes it even more than I do.'

Marie Antoinette had taken an energetic part in the plans that had been going forward. It was she who wrote long letters, usually in code, to Mercy and others and who concerned herself with the question of raising money and ensuring the support of the Emperor's troops on the frontier in the event of an attempt being made to bring the royal family back by force from Montmédy to further captivity in Paris.

Meanwhile the King had made elaborate arrangements with Bouillé for protection along the road to Montmédy. Three routes were open to him—by Flanders, Reims or Châlons. The first and safest was rejected instantly by the King because it would have necessitated passing through the domains of the Emperor, and nothing would induce Louis XVI to leave the kingdom; the second was also disapproved by him as he feared to be recognized in the city where he had been seen at his coronation. The King therefore decided on the route by Châlons. Between that town and Montmédy detachments of troops were to be posted at intervals—40 hussars of the Duc de Lauzun's regiment commanded by the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville<sup>1</sup> at Pont de Sommeville, 40 dragoons of the Régiment Royal at Sainte-Ménéhould, 100 dragoons commanded by the Comte Charles de Damas at Clermont, 60 hussars of the Duc de Lauzun's regiment commanded by a young German, Leonard de Röhrig, the Comte Charles de Raigecourt and the Chevalier de Bouillé, younger son of the Marquis de Bouillé, at Varennes. At Montmédy a small army corps was to be assembled under the Marquis de Bouillé himself.

<sup>1</sup> Claude Antoine Gabriel, the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville, nephew of the Duc de Choiseul, Minister of Louis XV, who died in 1785.

Lieutenant-General the Baron de Goguelat, an impassioned royalist whom the Queen trusted implicitly, acted as courier, taking messages in cipher that passed between the King and Bouillé from April to June. The Emperor had now promised to have 12,000 to 15,000 troops on the frontier.

The success of these plans depended largely on following the time-table made out by Bouillé, but the King kept on putting off the day of departure which, as Bouillé observed, threw out his arrangements. Whether Louis XVI, to whom the idea of becoming 'a fugitive King' had always been repellent, hoped that events might take a turn for the better so that after all flight would not be necessary, or whether, as the Queen said in her letter of April 14, they waited to be assured of support by the Emperor's troops in case of need, the date was changed again and again. At first February seems to have been contemplated, then early in May, then the end of May, then for reasons we shall see later, the 6th or 7th of June. But now, on May 27, the King wrote to Bouillé saying he had definitely decided to start on June 19 between midnight and one o'clock and that he would go in an ordinary carriage as far as Bondy, seven miles out of Paris, where his own travelling carriage would await him.

The second carriage, the famous berline which has constantly been described as an egregious bit of folly on the part of the King and particularly of the Queen, had been ordered by Fersen through a Russian friend of his, Mme de Korff, who was then living in Paris but was expecting shortly to leave France with her two children. The royal family were to travel as Mme de Korff and her party with a passport made out in her name, of which she had been able to procure a duplicate by pretending she had burnt the one she kept for her own use. Undoubtedly it would have been wiser for the royal family to travel, as Bouillé proposed, in two ordinary carriages which would have attracted no attention, but the King and Queen refused to be parted from each other or from their children. It seems that on the 6th of October they had taken a

resolution to this effect, and one can understand that in those perilous days, betrayed on all sides, they should have dreaded the idea of handing their children over to other hands, not knowing what would become of them.

Then instead of sending Madame Elisabeth with the Comte and Comtesse de Provence, as at first arranged, they decided to take her with them. There was also Mme de Tourzel, whom Bouillé bitterly reproaches in his *Memoirs* for 'insisting on her right' to go with the royal family instead of the Marquis d'Agoult, who would have been of more use for defence; Saint-Priest also violently denounces this 'pretension' and 'impertinence' on the part of the Marquise. But, as we have seen, Marie Antoinette had resolved as early as February 3 to have her with them; besides, as Croker points out, there could not have been any competition between d'Agoult and Mme de Tourzel for a seat since it was already arranged for six persons to go inside the berline and it was only a question of taking a seventh, on the box. Choiseul asserts that the King hesitated between him, d'Agoult and the Duc de Brissac, and finally decided on three gentlemen of his bodyguard, one to sit on the box, the other two to ride on horseback in front and behind the carriage. There was therefore no cause for reproach against Mme de Tourzel, and, as Croker further observes, her presence inside the coach with the women and children on this long journey, during which it would be imprudent for them to get down, was naturally to be preferred to that of a man. Besides, most important point of all, Mme de Tourzel was required to impersonate Mme de Korff, the owner of the passport, who was to do all the talking at the post-houses, whilst the King, Queen and Madame Elisabeth were to pass as her attendants, and Madame Royale and the Dauphin as her two little girls. The choice of three gentlemen of the bodyguard, MM. de Valory, de Maldent and du Moustier, who were to pass as menservants, called by their Christian names François, Saint Jean and Melchior, was, however, certainly a mistake,

for on the one hand they did not fit the part they were required to play, and on the other they had not the standing or experience which would enable them to act authoritatively in an emergency. No real menservants were to be taken on the flight, but two waiting-women, Mme Brunier and Mme Neuville, were to follow in a separate carriage.

The berline was thus required to hold eight people—six inside and two on the box. Moreover, owing to the necessity that the travellers should avoid getting out for any purpose and risking recognition, certain conveniences had to be provided, also utensils for preparing meals in the carriage, together with supplies of food and drink. All these arrangements, which ordinary travellers would not require, took up space and necessitated a carriage being specially built for the occasion.

The order was given by Mme de Korff as early as December 1790 to a coachbuilder named Louis, with instructions to have it ready by February. Fersen then, somewhat imprudently, interviewed Louis himself, who proposed that, in order to expedite matters, he should use the frame of a carriage he had begun to make for Mme de Polastron in 1789 which had been countermanded on account of the Revolution. The berline does not therefore appear to have been of an unprecedented size, and though no doubt heavy-looking, neither its shape nor its colour—variously described as brown or green—was apparently anything remarkable. ‘We travelled,’ says Mme de Tourzel, ‘in a large berline which was very comfortable, but had nothing extraordinary about it such as people have been pleased to go on repeating ever since the sad ending of that unfortunate journey.’ It was certainly expensive, costing the sum of nearly 6000 livres—about £260—owing mainly to the inside fittings which Fersen had chosen with great care so as to ensure the comfort of the fugitives. Why should he not? Travelling by road in those days at its best entailed discomfort that no modern motorist could put up with; old-fashioned springs, iron-tyred wheels jolting and



reported to her lover Gouvion and to the *Comité des Recherches* of the Assembly that preparations were being made for flight. Barruel asserts that this denunciation, dated June 10, 'is carefully preserved in the Archives Nationales.'<sup>1</sup> Fersen relates in his Journal that the day after the flight this woman 'said horrible things about the Queen,' that she had heard footsteps passing the door after the King was in bed and that 'this was nothing new.' Yet later on, after her treachery had been proved and she had been dismissed, she dared to beg the Queen to take her back into her service.

But there was another traitor in the camp whose presence proved still more fatal. At the end of May it was discovered that the Dauphin had a very dangerous woman amongst his attendants who was in waiting until June 11. This may have been the same person to whom d'Hézécques refers when he says that besides the one who betrayed the Queen to La Fayette, there was a woman who had been suborned by Voidel, president of the *Comité des Recherches* and an ardent Orléaniste, to whom she reported everything. At any rate the Dauphin's waiting-woman was held to be so dangerous that the flight was put off till June 12, when she would be safely out of the way and replaced by Mme Brunier, who was to be trusted. But after all the woman did not leave on the 11th and the flight was again postponed, this time to the 19th, and Bouillé made his military preparations accordingly. Then, at the last moment, she insisted on remaining until the morning of the 20th. In vain the Duc de Choiseul implored the King and Queen to order Mme Brunier to take her place earlier; they evidently feared that any alteration in these arrangements would arouse suspicion. So on the 13th the King and Fersen wrote to tell de Bouillé that the flight must be postponed until the night of the 20th. This message only reached him at Longwy on the 15th, and de Bouillé declared that it again upset all his plans for the disposal of troops. On such small events as a maid's 'week off' did the success of the great enterprise depend!

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire du Jacobinisme*, iv. 317.

However, when the morning of June 20 dawned, everything promised well. Although a rumour had gone round that the royal family were preparing for flight, the date on which it was to take place does not appear to have been known even to La Fayette and, beyond doubling the guards everywhere, he seems to have taken no extraordinary precautions.

Throughout the day things went on as usual. At half-past ten in the morning the Dauphin went to work in his little garden; at eleven the Queen attended mass and, on coming out of the chapel, ordered her carriage for five o'clock in the afternoon to take her children for a drive. Madame Elisabeth, who so far knew nothing of what was on foot, went as far as Bellevue and only returned at one o'clock in time for dinner. After the meal had ended the children were sent to their apartment, and it was then that the King and Queen led Madame Elisabeth into another room and told her they were all to escape that very night.

Later in the afternoon Fersen came to make final arrangements, and as he took his leave, Louis XVI said to him: 'Monsieur de Fersen, whatever happens, I shall never forget all you are doing for me.'

'The Queen,' says Fersen, 'wept a great deal.' That day for her was one of agonized suspense. Everything depended on the success of the venture; one false step might ruin everything! But drying her tears she set off in her carriage with her children and some of her suite to what was known as the *Jardin Boutin*, where it was then the fashion to walk. Madame Royale relates that she and her brother had been told nothing of the projected flight and only noticed that their parents seemed agitated and preoccupied all day. But as they wandered round the garden the Queen took her daughter aside and told her in a few words that something was about to happen and that she must not be alarmed—which only had the effect of completely mystifying the child and filling her with vague fears for the future. At seven o'clock she returned sadly with her mother to the Château.

rattling over the cobbles that still pave the streets of French towns and villages, for nearly 200 miles at a stretch, would have been bad enough for travellers who could get out for meals or rest. If Fersen saw to it that the seats were well cushioned and the accessories convenient it was all to his credit; this could not affect the exterior appearance of the berline and nobody was expected to look inside. Where Fersen seems to have been imprudent was in failing to keep it carefully concealed. For after being lodged from June 4 to 19 in the coach-house of Mrs. Sullivan, it was moved to Fersen's own stables in the Rue Matignon and allowed to stand for some hours in the courtyard where the curious came to gaze at it. According to d'Allonville, Fersen committed the further imprudence of taking it out three days earlier for a trial trip along the road to Vincennes with six horses attached to it, which he drove himself. Unfortunately he was met by the Duc d'Orléans driving with his mistress, Mme de Buffon, and the Duc, astonished at Fersen's speed and the size of the berline, called out:

'Why is it so large? Is it to take all the Opera chorus away from us?'

'No, Monseigneur, I leave that with you!'

And having delivered this hit at the Duc's well-known taste for chorus-girls, Fersen drove on.

Did the Duc d'Orléans give away what he had seen? Mme de Buffon assured d'Allonville he had not; if so, it was hardly in keeping with his usual conduct.

But by this time there were many other ways in which plans for the flight may have leaked out, for the secret had not been kept to the original six people. Besides several men in whom the King and Queen had complete confidence there were at least four women. First of all Mme de Korff, then Mrs. Sullivan, who must have known what was on foot since the berline was lodged in her coach-house and who, according to the Comte d'Hézécques, wanted to go with her lover Fersen on the day of the flight.<sup>1</sup> Mme Thibaut, the

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 352.

Queen's first waiting-woman, who was to join her mistress by another route and who had prepared everything for the journey, had also to be told. Finally Mme Campan, the second waiting-woman, who was not to take part in the flight but was entrusted with the packing of clothes, jewels and other things that were sent to Brussels for safety. According to Mme Campan, whole trousseaux for the Queen and her children were dispatched there, and Marie Antoinette insisted on a large dressing-case containing silver toilet articles being sent to the same destination. All this was liable to excite suspicion.

Moreover, amongst the Queen's attendants there was a certain Mme Rochereuil, variously described as a *femme de garde-robe* or as a *porte-chaise d'affaires*, who was known to be the mistress of de Gouvion, an aide-de-camp of La Fayette's, and to be imbued with revolutionary ideas. This woman had shown so much grief and indignation during the events of October 5 and 6 that the Queen, touched by her apparent devotion, had her lodged near her on the ground floor of the Tuileries, in a room opening out of the apartment that had been occupied by the Duc de Villequier who had now emigrated. But as it was through this apartment the Queen intended to escape on June 20, and Mme Rochereuil was not in the secret, she had her moved early in the month into another part of the Château. This excited the woman's suspicions and she started to spy on the King and Queen. Mme Campan declares that the dispatch of the dressing-case to Brussels had already been noticed by her and that she had reported the incident to Bailly on May 15.

Another day the Queen, helped by Mme Campan, spent some hours packing her diamonds which, after being taken out of their red morocco cases stamped with the Queen's arms, were placed in a box to be handed over to Léonard, the Queen's hairdresser, who, although he did not know it yet, was to take part in the flight. Mme Rochereuil, who had access to the Queen's rooms, noticed the cotton wool used for packing the diamonds lying on a sofa and forthwith

Both children were put to bed as usual, the Dauphin at nine, Madame Royale at ten o'clock.

Meanwhile the Queen sent for her coiffeur, and after her hair had been dressed went into the salon where the Comte and Comtesse de Provence had arrived to say good-bye. The brothers and sisters took leave of each other with great affection; Madame Elisabeth, calm and serene, embraced the Comte de Provence, and presenting him with a holy image, said: 'My brother, you believe in religion, let me give you this which will bring you good fortune.' Overcome perhaps with tardy repentance for the injuries he had done her in the past, the Comte kissed Marie Antoinette effusively, whereat she exclaimed: 'Have a care not to work on my feelings; I do not want anyone to see that I have been crying.'

Little did any of them guess they were never to meet again on earth! The Comte and Comtesse de Provence went back to the Luxembourg and from there escaped the same night safely through Flanders to Brussels. Had Louis XVI only felt as little scruple as his brother with regard to leaving France and taken that route to Montmédy his journey might have been accomplished with the same ease.

After supper the King, Queen and Madame Elisabeth remained for a while in their apartment and then held their *couchers* with the usual ceremonial. Both Bailly and La Fayette were present at the King's, which ended at 11.20 precisely. During the course of the day rumours had been circulated concerning the King's intended flight and extra precautions had been taken by La Fayette; the patrols that afternoon had been doubled and a National Guard slept across the threshold of Madame Elisabeth's bedroom. Apparently no possible way of escape lay open to them.

But all this had been foreseen. Some five months earlier secret doors were made in the panelling, so cleverly concealed as to remain undetected. Through these the royal family could pass to each other's rooms without attracting

the attention of the guards. It was thus that the Queen was able to reach Madame Royale, who was in bed but not asleep, with the faithful Mme Brunier in attendance. Marie Antoinette then explained what was happening, telling her daughter to get up and dress and Mme Brunier to prepare for the journey.

The Queen then went to the Dauphin, who was fast asleep, and, waking him gently, whispered to him that he was to go to a military post where there would be a great many soldiers. At this the little prince, who loved nothing better than dressing up in the uniform he had been given as captain of the Guards, instantly jumped out of bed crying: 'Quick, quick, let us hurry, give me my sword and boots and let us start!'

But instead of his uniform he was given a little girl's frock and bonnet, in which his sister declares that he looked charming, whilst Madame Royale herself was dressed in a frock of brown flowered calico.

The rest of the party then began to get ready for their rôles. Mme de Tourzel, as the Baronne de Korff, was to appear the most important. The Queen as the governess wore a brown dress, a black cloak and a black hat *à la chinoise*, trimmed with lace that fell over her eyes, like a veil. Madame Elisabeth, as the lady companion, was dressed still more plainly. The Dauphin, who had begun to fall asleep again, opened his eyes, and seeing everyone around him in this fantastic attire, observed that they were evidently going to act a comedy since they were all in disguise.

By half-past ten everyone except the King was ready, and the Queen then led her children and Mme de Tourzel by the way of escape she had thought out. It will be remembered that the treacherous waiting-woman, Mme Rochereuil, had occupied a room leading into the apartment of the Duc de Villequier, first gentleman of the bedchamber, who on the suppression of the higher officials had emigrated early in 1791. This apartment had a passage leading to a glass door opening into the Cour des Princes through which Marie

Antoinette planned to escape—hence her order for Mme Rochereuil to be moved elsewhere. She had also had a door secretly made in it opening into her own apartment, with a duplicate key which she kept herself. The plan was well thought out, for, as the apartment of the Duc de Villequier was now uninhabited, the glass door was left unguarded and the sentinel patrolling the main entrance leading to the royal apartments turned in his walk before reaching this small private exit in the corner of the Cour des Princes.

After passing through the room of Mme Rochereuil and the empty apartment leading out of it the fugitives reached the glass door safely, and had only to wait for the moment when the sentinel's back was turned in order to slip out into the Cour des Princes, where a carriage from a livery-stable—hardly more than a cab—was waiting. On the box sat Fersen, disguised as a coachman. At the risk of being detected the Queen saw her children and Mme de Tourzel into the carriage, which then drove away whilst she slipped back into the Château. It had been arranged that the rest of the royal family should come out separately and find their way to the carriage, which, after a *détour* through the surrounding streets, came and took up its stand in the Petit Carrousel outside the courts of the Château.

The first to arrive was Madame Elisabeth, who also succeeded in passing through the glass door with the Chevalier de Maldent, one of the three *gardes du corps* who were to go with them—or, according to another account, one of her equerries. Crossing the courtyards she reached the place where the carriage was standing but, not recognizing it, sat down on a seat near by. Fersen, walking round his horses as if to examine them, passed close beside her and said in a low voice: 'They are waiting for you.' Madame Elisabeth then understood and entered the carriage, treading inadvertently on the Dauphin, who was concealed under the skirts of Mme de Tourzel, but the little boy had the presence of mind not to cry out.

Then followed an agonizing time of waiting—more than

an hour and a half, says Mme de Tourzel—during which the two women in the carriage wondered distractedly what had happened to the King and Queen and dreaded at every moment to be discovered. Fersen played his part well, talking to a cabman near by in the slang of his kind and giving him a pinch of tobacco out of the shabby snuff-box he carried on him.

Meanwhile what had happened in the Château? The King's *coucher* had lasted longer than was expected. Owing to the presence of Bailly and La Fayette any appearance of haste had to be avoided. At last the King got into bed, the lights were put out, everyone took their leave; Louis XVI was left alone in darkness. Then, rising hastily, he made his way to the Queen's apartment where the clothes provided for him by Fersen had been laid out—a grey coat, a long brown *redingote* over it, a wig that effectually disguised him, with a round hat on the top of it so as to impersonate a retainer of the Baronne de Korff. For a fortnight previously the Chevalier de Coigny, who was in the secret and bore a striking likeness to the King, had left the Château every night dressed in the same way; the sentinels were therefore accustomed to seeing a man of this appearance passing out. Louis XVI was thus able to leave tranquilly not by the glass door, but by the grand staircase and the main door of the Château, amongst the crowd that had attended his *coucher* and the people of all kinds who habitually streamed out at this hour. Such was his imperturbability that when one of his shoe-buckles became detached he bent down whilst passing a sentry and carefully fastened it before passing out of the courts. But after he had safely reached the cab which was drawn up at the corner of the Rue de l'Échelle, another wait of half an hour took place before the Queen arrived.

This delay, the most unfortunate of all, was caused by an extraordinary mistake which ought to have been avoided. Marie Antoinette came out of the small glass door into the Cour des Princes, with one of the three *gardes du corps*, M. du Moustier, and after crossing the Cour des Princes and



the Cour Royale they were about to go out of the great gateway when she saw La Fayette's carriage with flaming torches approaching. Terrified at the thought of being recaptured she squeezed herself against a wall with the lace of her hat falling over her face, and the carriage passed so close to her that she was able to touch the wheels with a light switch she held in her hand.

Breathless after escaping from this danger, she and her companion went out into the Carrousel and here lost their way in the labyrinth of little streets leading out of it. Instead of turning to the left towards the Rue de l'Échelle they went to the right, and according to some accounts, even crossed the Pont Royal over the Seine. But this seems improbable. The only certainty is that they wasted half an hour of precious time wandering about in all directions. That the Queen should not have been provided with a guide who knew the way was a blunder it is impossible to explain. When at last she reached the carriage the relief of the waiting fugitives knew no bounds, and the King, clasping her in his arms, kissed her fondly, repeating: 'Oh, how glad I am to see you safely arrived at last!' In their joy all embraced each other, then with a crack of the whip Fersen started up his horses and the royal family set forth on their perilous adventure.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DRAMA OF VARENNES

THE first part of the journey, as far as Châlons, had been arranged by the Queen and Fersen; after that the plans made between the King and the Marquis de Bouillé were to come into operation, and at Pont de Sommeville, eleven miles beyond Châlons, Bouillé's chain of troops was to begin. Up to that point no military escort was to be provided.

The two maids, Mme Brunier and Mme Neuville, in their yellow cabriolet with three horses, had gone on ahead in the afternoon and were to join the royal family at Bondy, outside Paris, whilst the berline, fetched from Mrs. Sullivan's stables by the *garde du corps*, du Moustier, was to be driven by Fersen's coachman, Balthazar Sapel, to the Barrière Saint Martin, one of the gates of Paris, where the fugitives were to change into it from their hired carriage.

But no sooner had they left the Tuileries than another delay occurred. For some reason Fersen did not take the shortest road, either because he was not well enough acquainted with the streets of Paris or because he purposely made a *détour* so as to pass by Mrs. Sullivan's house in the Rue de Clichy in order to make sure the berline had started off as arranged. In this way another half-hour was wasted.

However, after a further hitch in the shape of a wedding party which blocked the road for a moment, the fugitives reached the Barrière Saint Martin safely and looked about for the berline, which at first could not be discovered. After a short search the large brown coach drawn by four of Fersen's horses was found, and the two carriages being

drawn up closely side by side the whole party changed from one to the other, without being seen. Fersen then shut the royal family in, drove the two-horse carriage into a ditch, leaving it there wrecked, then mounting the box of the berline beside du Moustier and Balthazar said: 'Now then, go it! drive quickly!' and the great coach bounded forward along the road to Châlons.

By this time it was past two o'clock in the morning and the day was just beginning to dawn. Fersen realized the desperate need for haste, and all the way to Bondy kept cracking his whip and calling out: 'Go on, Balthazar, your horses are not keeping up the pace, go faster!' And the coachman, urging on his team, succeeded in reaching Bondy in half an hour. Here the two waiting-women in their cabriolet were waiting. The four horses were then taken out of the berline and a relay of six put in.

The moment had now come for Fersen to take leave of the royal family, for the King had refused to let him share their dangers any further. In the publicity of the posting-house no affectionate farewells could pass between them, so calling out cheerfully: 'Adieu, Madame de Korff!' Fersen turned his back on the friends he had risked his life to save and rode back to Paris, whence he started for Brussels in the course of the same day. Balthazar followed his master with the other horses, leaving the postillions to conduct the berline for the rest of the journey.

Now for the first time the Queen was thrown on her own resources. The man who had planned everything, thought of everything, dared anything, on whom, ever since the plan was first mooted, she had leant at every turn, was gone, and she was left to bear the responsibility for the success of the venture as far as Châlons. After that the responsibility would fall on the King and the Marquis de Bouillé.

All, however, seemed to be going well. As they reached the open country the King's spirits rose.

'Here I am,' he said, 'out of that town of Paris where I have been so steeped in bitterness. Once I am in the saddle

again you can be sure I shall be very different from what you have seen me hitherto.'

He went on to talk happily of the future, of the return of his brothers and faithful friends to France, and of the hope of repairing the injury he had done to the cause of religion by his forced sanction of the decrees relating to the clergy.<sup>1</sup>

It was a moment of exhilaration for all the fugitives. After the long imprisonment at the Tuileries following on the horrors of the October days, after enduring daily, almost hourly, insults and alarms, passing from one crisis to another, living in perpetual fear of their lives amidst the heat and ferment of Paris, it was like heaven to look out on the peaceful countryside in the freshness of the summer morning and to feel free, free at last.

They even began to enter into the fun of the adventure, arranging the parts they were to play, choosing names to fit them: Mme de Tourzel was of course the Baronne de Korff; then the Queen as the governess was to be Mme Rochet, Madame Elisabeth the companion, Rosalie, the King the *intendant* of the Baronne named Durand, whilst Madame Royale and the Dauphin as her two little girls were to be called Amélie and Aglaé. One can imagine the laughter of these unhappy people who had not laughed for so long, as they planned the comedy which in the end none of them remembered to play.

After passing Meaux at six o'clock they began to think of breakfast and Fersen's carefully prepared provisions were unpacked; the Queen and Madame Elisabeth threw up their veils, and dispensing with forks and plates 'ate off pieces of bread like hunters.'

Louis XVI, indulging his taste for geography, followed their route with interest on the map he had brought with him and noted the time they were keeping. Taking out his watch, which showed that it was eight o'clock, he said: 'La Fayette must now be feeling very embarrassed.' But no one felt any sympathy for the General.

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, i. 312.

Marie Antoinette was filled with hope and thankfulness. 'François,' she said to one of the *gardes du corps*, the Comte de Valory, 'it seems to me that all is going well; if we were going to be arrested we should have been so already; they cannot have found out we have gone.'

'Madame,' answered de Valory, 'once we are twelve leagues from Paris we need have no further anxiety. We should have been overtaken by now if anything had been noticed. We need not be afraid; I see no sign of a movement or of suspicion anywhere. Have courage, Madame; yes, all is going well.'<sup>1</sup>

'When we have passed Châlons,' said the King, 'there will be nothing to fear; at Pont de Sommeville we shall find the first detachment of troops and then the safety of our journey will be assured.'

But before they reached Châlons the berline broke down. New though it was the traces had given way and another hour of precious time was spent in repairs.

Then they started on again and arrived at Châlons at about four in the afternoon. All seemed quiet, and although the King was recognized by a number of people, including the post-master, the spirit of the town was too loyal for any obstacle to be put in his way, and he passed on safely. But as the berline halted for a moment on the high-road an unknown man approached it and, putting his head in at the window nearest Mme de Tourzel, said quickly: 'Your plans have been badly made; you will be stopped!' And with that he vanished before any questions could be asked.

As one reads the accounts of this momentous journey which was to decide the fate of France and change the destiny of Europe, how vividly one can imagine the state of mind of the fugitives! So graphically has the story been told that one finds oneself living through their emotions, now holding one's breath with fear, now taking heart again, hoping against hope that all will yet be well, feeling that in

<sup>1</sup> *Récit du Comte de Valory, in Mémoires sur l'Affaire de Varennes* (1823), p. 269.

the end they must be able to escape after so many dangers have been passed!

Only ten more miles now to Pont de Sommeville, where the Duc de Choiseul and the Baron de Goguelat with their forty hussars will be waiting, and all will be able to breathe freely at last! As the six horses dash onwards, villages flash by in rapid succession—Notre-Dame de l'Épine, La Motte, St. Martin de Courtoisole—now they are almost at Pont de Sommeville. . . . They have arrived. It is six o'clock in the evening.

But where is Choiseul? Where is Goguelat? Where are the hussars? Not a sign of them is to be seen anywhere! The couriers who have ridden ahead come back to say they can find no troops and dare not make enquiries for fear of arousing suspicion.

The Queen's heart sank. This contretemps following on the mysterious warning of the man on the road filled her with forebodings. Leaning forward, she said in a low voice to Madame Elisabeth: 'All is lost. We shall be stopped.'

What had happened? The Duc de Choiseul, in accordance with the plans he had made with the King, had set off from Paris ten hours before the royal family, taking with him the Queen's hairdresser Léonard, who had been entrusted with her diamonds and who she wished to join her at the end of the flight. But Léonard was not in the secret and was only told by Choiseul that he was to go with him to a distance some leagues from Paris. This news at first threw him into a state of consternation, he had made no arrangements for a journey, and besides, a lady was waiting for him to dress her hair! 'Mon Dieu!' he cried, 'what is to be done?' Choiseul, however, succeeded in soothing him, and eventually told him that he was called upon to go to the frontier where he would render a great service to the Queen. This enchanted Léonard, and his joy knew no bounds when, after they had passed Châlons, the Duc let him into the secret of the flight—'the King and Queen with Madame Elisabeth and their children are going

to Montmédy—they will be saved!’ At this the faithful coiffeur burst into tears, exclaiming: ‘Oh, Dieu, is it possible?’

At twelve o’clock in the morning of the 21st Choiseul and Léonard duly arrived at Pont de Sommeville, where the Baron de Goguelat joined them an hour later as arranged, with the forty hussars of the regiment of Lauzun, who were only told they were to act as a convoy to a ‘treasure’ in the form of money for paying the troops, which was to pass that way. The King was due to arrive at three o’clock. But as that hour passed, then four o’clock, five o’clock and still no berline came in sight, the two officers grew more and more anxious and finally concluded that the flight had been put off again. Léonard was therefore told to go on and take messages to the officers in command of the posts further along the route to the effect that the King was not arriving. Meanwhile the position of the officers had become precarious, for the continued presence of the troops in the town had begun to excite suspicion, and by five o’clock the attitude of the inhabitants appeared to Choiseul so menacing that, fearing a riot which might obstruct the King if after all he were to arrive, he decided to withdraw to Varennes. Accordingly at a quarter to six he and Goguelat with the forty hussars set out for that town across country, avoiding Sainte-Ménéhould so as not to arouse further suspicions.

The berline reached Pont de Sommeville an hour after they had left.

All, however, was not yet lost. The royal family reached Sainte-Ménéhould about eight o’clock in the evening without any further contretemps. Here forty dragoons of the Régiment Royal, commanded by Capitaine d’Andoins, who like Choiseul was in the secret, had arrived earlier in the day, but finding the inhabitants suspicious and ill-disposed towards the soldiers, he ordered his men to dismount and walk unarmed about the streets. In spite of this pacific measure the population, very revolutionary in their sentiments, became more and more agitated, and the town was

already in a state of ferment when the berline drew up at the posting-house to relay.

According to Mme de Tourzel, Capitaine d'Andoins then looked in at the carriage window and said to her: 'Plans have gone wrong: I am moving away so as not to arouse suspicion.' According to other accounts it was Louis XVI, who, seeing none of the military preparations he had expected to find here, put his head out of the window to make enquiries and was recognized by the post-master Drouet, a furious revolutionary, who, holding an assignat with the King's head on it in his hand, compared it with the one at the window of the berline and immediately noticed the likeness between the two.

This generally accepted version of the story is shown, however, by Lenotre to be a fable invented by Drouet for his own glorification, the truth being that a warning had been conveyed to him by the post-master at Châlons that the King was on his way to Sainte-Ménéhould, but the message did not reach him until an hour after the royal family had passed through. At the same time a rumour of their flight spread through the town, and the municipality sent to ask Drouet about the occupants of the berline. Drouet gave a description of a face somewhat resembling that of Louis XVI and expressed his suspicions that it was indeed the King he had seen. It was then, an hour and a half after the berline had gone on its way, that the municipality dispatched Drouet and another man named Guillaume in pursuit of the fugitives.

It seems probable, therefore, that however careful the King had been he would have been recognized. Whether he committed the imprudences frequently attributed to him remains a matter of dispute. The *gardes du corps* in their evidence afterwards declared that he had got out of the carriage several times as a matter of necessity for himself and in order 'to put the ladies at their ease,' that he had even spoken to people and discussed the state of the crops; Mme de Tourzel, however, declares that he only got out



once, for the same reason, but it is quite possible that she was asleep on the other occasions. It is clear that he did not leave the berline for a meal as certain writers have stated, nor was it to ask for anything to eat that he showed himself at Sainte-Ménéhould; the travellers were well supplied with food and drink for the whole journey.

On leaving Sainte-Ménéhould Drouet and his companion followed the road taken by the King, which bears to the right through the forest of Argonne as far as Clermont, where one road goes on to Verdun and another turns sharply to the left in the direction of Varennes. Not knowing the King's destination, Drouet might well have gone on to Verdun; unfortunately he met the postillions who, after driving the berline to Clermont, were returning to Sainte-Ménéhould, and who were able to tell him they had heard the courier on the box of the berline call out to the fresh postillions: 'Take the road to Varennes.' The two pursuers then took a short cut through the forest which enabled them to reach Varennes at the same time as the King.

Drouet, however, had not left Sainte-Ménéhould unobserved. A trusty sergeant-major of dragoons, an ardent royalist named Lagache, who seems to have guessed what was happening, had been watching Drouet's movements and, springing on to his charger, followed him and his companion into the woods. Strongly suspecting their intention to betray the King, Lagache drew his pistols from his holster and was about to fire on them when he reflected that he might have been mistaken, so, overtaking them, he questioned Drouet. But the man's answers were so evasive he could make nothing of them. Still following him, however, he took his pistols out again and again but could not make up his mind to shoot for fear of killing an innocent man. Finally the pair were lost to sight in the woods and Lagache gave up the pursuit.<sup>1</sup>

It was now a race between Drouet and the King. But

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 238.

the King did not know it. No one in the berline suspected that he had been recognized at Sainte-Ménéhould, and all went on their way serenely to the next stopping-place.

At half-past nine they arrived at Clermont where Colonel Comte Charles de Damas was waiting for them at the head of a hundred dragoons. But here, too, there seemed to be an undercurrent of revolt, and Damas urged de Valory, who was acting as outrider, to get the royal family as quickly as possible through the town. Whilst the horses were being changed at the posting-house Damas, surrounded by officers and men, was able to say a few words to the King and Queen, telling them he was going to do his best to send an escort of dragoons with them to Varennes. But now for the first time the situation became threatening, for the people barred the way of the soldiers out of the town, and in the end the dragoons, yielding to popular clamour and not knowing it was the King they were called upon to defend, refused to obey the order of their commander.

However, the royal family were allowed to go on their way, and in spite of the opposition of the crowd, Damas succeeded in sending off a quartermaster with five or six men in the wake of the two carriages, but not knowing the road they took the wrong turning and went on towards Verdun instead of Varennes.

Damas, thinking all was well, could hardly contain himself for joy as he watched the berline start off safely; mounting his horse and rallying a few loyal dragoons around him, he took them into his confidence, saying: 'Let us now get out of here as best we can; what matters anything? The King is saved!'

But the party in the berline were not so confident. The scene at Clermont had shaken their nerve and seemed like a presage of coming disaster. Yet everything had been arranged for at Varennes. A relay of six strong horses was to be provided by the Baron de Goguelat, and sixty hussars of the Régiment de Lauzun were to be stationed in the town. There seemed, therefore, no special cause for alarm

when the fugitives arrived there safely soon after eleven o'clock at night.

Now Varennes, which is built on the slope of a hill, is divided into two portions, the upper and the lower town, separated by the river Aire over which runs a bridge. According to the plans made with the Baron de Goguelat, the relay was to be waiting in the upper portion of the town at a certain house close to the entrance which had been described to the King, but de Valory, who was acting as outrider, did not know where to look for it, and he was still wandering round in all directions when the berline arrived. What was the dismay of the fugitives to find no relay, no hussars, and no one to tell them where either were to be found!

The summer night was fine but pitch-dark, which made it difficult to distinguish anything. The King himself then got down from the berline thinking he recognized the house agreed upon with Goguelat, but nothing was to be found there. Finally the Queen descended and both wandered up and down the street, knocking at doors in vain. The whole place seemed to be asleep.

Then in despair they entered the carriage again and offered the postillions more money if they would drive on to the next relay, but the men refused, saying their horses were too tired to go any further than Varennes. However, when it was suggested to them that the relay might be waiting in the lower town, they consented to go on there and drove off at a leisurely pace down the steep street leading to the river—straight into the trap laid for the fugitives.

For hardly had they reached the archway in the town wall leading to the bridge when terrifying shouts of 'Halt! halt!' were heard, a crowd with flaming torches closed round the carriages, hands grasped the horses' bridles, muskets were thrust through the windows of the berline.

'Who are you?' voices cried.

'Madame de Korff and her family going to Frankfurt.'

‘That may be so, but it must be proved. Show your passport!’

The passport was produced and found to be in order; only, as one man observed, it was not signed by the President of the National Assembly.

Suspicion was growing. Torches were flashed in at the carriage, lighting up the face of the King. By this time the inhabitants of the town had awaked and poured out of their houses. Then the tocsin rang out, the alarm was beaten and the cry went up: ‘Barricade the bridge!’

The materials for this were all ready. Two long wagons were now thrown on their sides at each end of the bridge, and a cartload of furniture that happened to be standing by was emptied on the top of these, completely blocking the way.

Meanwhile the *gardes du corps* had attempted to use force, urging the postillions to go forward; the crowd hearing this order surged forward, muskets were again pointed at the carriage and voices cried threateningly: ‘One step forward and we fire!’

Monsieur Sauce, a small grocer and procurator of the Commune, then approached the carriage and told the travellers they would have to wait until the morning before continuing their journey; meanwhile he offered them the hospitality of his shop close by.

Now was the moment to use force. Madame Royale relates that six mounted dragoons passed a few minutes later but without an officer to give them orders; and that six resolute men could have saved the King. The *gardes du corps* did their best, ordering the postillions to drive on and whipping up the horses, but two of the rioters called out that if an attempt was made to force a passage through the crowd they would fire into the carriage, and the mob declared they would kill everyone inside it. It was now that the mistake of bringing the *gardes du corps* instead of more responsible officers became apparent. The Duc de Brissac would undoubtedly have replied to these threats

by shooting down the ringleaders and intimidating the rest by this example; but the *gardes du corps* were not supplied with firearms, and had they been, the King would probably not have allowed them to be used. This horror of bloodshed was his undoing at every stage of the Revolution. What he needed at this moment was a man with sufficient authority to take the law into his own hands and save him in spite of himself.

But there was no one to do this, and Louis XVI, fearing for the lives of his family, yielded to the threats of the crowd and descended from the berline. Sauce, offering an arm to the Queen and Madame Elisabeth, led the way; the King walked with them, holding his children by the hand. The two maids and the three *gardes du corps* followed after. All entered Sauce's shop where candles, made on the premises, were stacked. Sitting down between two piles of these the Queen was nearly overcome with nausea at the smell of tallow and, with the other women of the party, begged to be taken elsewhere. Sauce replied that a room was being prepared for them and, before long, led them up a narrow, winding staircase to a fairly large back room with two windows looking out into a courtyard. In front of these were chairs in which the Queen, Madame Elisabeth, Madame Royale and the two maids took their seats; the *gardes du corps* ranged themselves on a bench along the wall. The King sat in one of two armchairs placed at a table in the middle of the room. In one corner was a four-post bedstead on which the children were laid; Mme de Tourzel took her place beside them. On the wall hung a portrait of the King in coloured plaster; for Sauce, though a fervent believer in the Constitution, was a monarchist by conviction and doubtless little dreamt that he was paving the way for regicide. Who indeed at that moment could realize the potentialities of the situation—the terrific importance of the drama that was being played out in the room over the shop of M. Sauce at Varennes? Only perhaps Marie Antoinette felt the full horror of what had happened: the one thing

that all along she dreaded had come to pass—the flight had failed, they were prisoners once more.

What was the explanation of this sudden check only twenty-two miles from their goal, where Bouillé and his legions were waiting to protect them? Who had given the alarm at Varennes? How could the bridge be blocked at a moment's notice? What had happened to the relay? Where were the hussars? The answer to these questions is to be found in a series of the most extraordinary fatalities.

First of all, the alarm had been given by Drouet. The post-master and his companion had won the race across country by the narrowest shave, entering Varennes only a few minutes before the King, and going straight through the upper town to a small inn, the *Bras d'Or*, situated close by the archway leading to the bridge, found the innkeeper and several men collected there discussing current events. Dashing into the room, Drouet took the innkeeper aside and said: 'Comrade, are you a good patriot?'

'Yes, without a doubt.'

'Then, my friend, go and warn all good people that the King is up on the heights of Varennes, that he is coming down and must be stopped.'

Thereupon the innkeeper ran to notify Sauce, whilst Drouet with several fellow-revolutionaries proceeded to collect the materials for barricading the bridge. It was thus that the two carts were found ready to hand in time to bar the passage of the royal family.

As to the relay, this had been provided, as arranged with Goguelat; the Duc de Choiseul had sent eight strong horses of his own to Varennes, six for the berline, two for the maids' carriage. These were stabled at an inn named *le Grand Monarque* in the lower town on the other side of the river and, when Goguelat went to join Choiseul at Pont de Sommeville, were left in the charge of two young officers, the Chevalier de Bouillé—second son of the Marquis—and M. de Raigecourt. Goguelat, thinking it would be

safer not to keep the horses in the upper town, gave orders that they should remain at the inn until he himself returned from Pont de Sommeville to announce that the berline was on its way, when the relay was to be taken up to the house at the entrance of the town agreed on with the King. Unfortunately, however, Goguelat and Choiseul on leaving Pont de Sommeville with their hussars lost their way across country and no news of the King's approach was brought. The two young officers, therefore, concluded that the flight had again been put off; moreover, at eight o'clock that evening Léonard, the coiffeur, passed through the town and gave them the message he had been ordered by Choiseul to deliver all along the route, that the berline had not arrived at Pont de Sommeville and must have been stopped at Châlons. So whilst the King and Queen were vainly hunting for the relay at the entrance to the upper town, young Bouillé and Raigecourt were waiting with it at the *Grand Monarque* on the other side of the bridge in the lower town. When at last Choiseul and Goguelat arrived at Varennes the royal family were already imprisoned at the house of Sauce.

The question of the hussars meanwhile had been badly bungled. Although the Marquis de Bouillé had given orders that all officers of the Duc de Lauzun's regiment of hussars were to be recalled from leave a few days before the flight to Montmédy, Baron de Mandel, the commanding officer, failed to carry out these directions, and the sixty hussars, instead of being placed under a responsible squadron leader, were sent to Varennes under the command of a sub-lieutenant aged twenty-three—a German, variously known as Röhrig or Rodwell—who was considered too young to be let into the secret of the flight and only believed that the troops were required to convoy money for paying the garrison. He was to be told the truth by Goguelat when he returned from Pont de Sommeville to announce the King's arrival, and here again Goguelat's failure to reach Varennes in time upset all calculations, for Röhrig, knowing nothing

of what was on foot, allowed his men to disperse all over the town. Thus when the royal family arrived no troops were on the spot to escort them.

Yet even now all was not lost. The royal family had been captured, but the sixty hussars were here in the town; Choiseul and Goguelat were approaching with forty more. Bouillé, with his troops stationed between Dun and Stenay, was only about twenty miles away. Choiseul's eight fine horses were waiting in the stables over the river to take the travellers on to Montmédy. Surely with all these forces at their disposal Drouet and his band could be overcome?

Louis XVI had not entirely given up hope even when led with his family into the room above the grocer's shop. Although the rôle of steward had been dropped, he had not yet acknowledged he was the King and continued to behave in the manner that might be expected of a traveller who had endured the comparatively trifling annoyance of being stopped on his journey. With all the cheerfulness he could assume he asked Sauce for a glass of wine. The grocer fetched a bottle of Burgundy and a piece of cheese. The King declared he had never drunk better wine and engaged his host in conversation. Each time that Sauce left the room on the pretext of calming the tumult outside the King told him to return quickly, saying he enjoyed talking to him, hoping to win the man over. 'By the way,' he asked, 'you have a bridge here.'

'Yes, monsieur, but it is blocked with carts and furniture.'

'Then I can pass by the ford.'

'Ah, the ford is still worse. We are afraid of the Austrians; I have had wolf traps and stakes put down. It is impossible to cross it.'

'Well, then, have the bridge cleared.'

'I will go and give the order, monsieur.'

But Sauce went out and sent a message to the municipality, saying: 'Send arms and cannon quickly, fetch the National Guards, the King is here with his family, quick, quick!'



Meanwhile the two children on the bed in the corner, worn out with the fatigue of the journey, had gone peacefully to sleep. The Queen, sunk in despair, sat in a dark corner of the room, with the lace veil of her hat drawn down over her face, saying nothing. Only once she spoke. A National Guard, or, according to some accounts, Drouet himself, who had found his way into the room, persisted in urging Louis XVI to declare himself. 'You are the King,' he repeated. 'I recognize you; come, admit it frankly.' At this insolence, Marie Antoinette, forgetting she was supposed to be a foreign lady on her way to Frankfurt, unable to contain herself any longer, threw up her veil and said in a commanding voice: 'If you recognize him as your King, then treat him with more respect!'

But still neither Sauce nor the municipal officers could be certain that this was really the royal family, and fearing they had made themselves ridiculous by stopping private travellers with a display of force they sent for a certain magistrate of the town, named Destez, who had seen the King and Queen in Paris. Destez arrived, and on entering the room bowed with the words: 'Ah, Sire!'

After this there was no more doubt, and the King, seeing the uselessness of keeping up any further pretence, threw himself on the mercy of his people.

'Yes,' he said loudly, 'I am your King; this is the Queen and the royal family. Surrounded in the capital by daggers and bayonets, I have come to the country, into the midst of my faithful subjects, to seek the peace and liberty you all enjoy. I could not stay in Paris; it would have been death to myself and my family. I have come to live amongst you, my children, whom I will not forsake.' Turning to Sauce he cried: 'Yes, my friend, it is your King who is in your power—will you betray him to his cruellest enemies? Save my wife, save my children. . . .'

In his emotion it is said that he even threw his arms around Sauce and his companions and embraced them. If so the action must not be misunderstood. In the old days,

as we have seen, Louis XVI had often embraced the people who crowded round to acclaim him—at his coronation, on his visit to Normandy; he had ‘pressed the peasants to his heart’ when visiting them in their homes and had been kissed by a countrywoman at Houdan. In a country where this form of greeting is customary even amongst men, where generals still kiss their men when decorating them with a ribbon, the King’s way of showing his affection was not as strange as it would appear in England where even a son does not kiss his father. At any rate, it was understood by the people who had collected in the grocer’s house at Varennes, for we read that they were touched to tears.

The King went on to assure them that he had no intention of leaving the country, that he was only going as far as Montmédy, and that he was ready to trust himself to the National Guards to escort him to his destination.

But nothing could shake the determination of Sauce. Even when Marie Antoinette added her entreaties to those of Louis XVI, imploring Sauce to save the Dauphin, the man only replied that he must do his duty. Then the poor Queen desperately pleaded with Mme Sauce to use her influence with her husband; the grocer’s wife replied with tears in her eyes: ‘Good God, Madame, they would kill M. Sauce. I love my King but I love my husband too. He is responsible, you see.’

The old grandmother of Sauce, an ardent royalist, showed more compassion. Seeing the Dauphin and Madame Royale lying like sleeping angels on the bed, she was so touched by their beauty, by the dignity of the Queen and the King’s quiet goodness, that she fell on her knees beside the children and, bursting into tears, kissed their hands, and after praying for them and blessing them, left the room weeping over their unhappy fate.

But now one ray of hope shone on the scene. Choiseul and Goguelat had arrived at last with their forty hussars from Pont de Sommeville and the Comte Charles de Damas from Clermont with his five or six trusty followers. Leaving

their men drawn up in order of battle outside the house, the three officers succeeded, one by one, in penetrating into the room where the royal family were assembled. At this sight Marie Antoinette came forward joyfully, holding out her hand. Were they to be saved after all?

One of Choiseul's first questions was: 'Where are the Chevalier de Bouillé, M. de Raigecourt and their hussars?'

'I have not seen a glimpse of them,' answered the King, and he went on to say: 'What is to be done?'

'Save yourself, Sire,' replied Damas.

Choiseul then proposed that he should dismount seven of his hussars, that the King should ride one of the horses, with the Dauphin in his arms, that the rest of the party should mount the others and, surrounded by the thirty-three hussars remaining who would hack their way through the crowd, they should escape out of the town.

'Do you answer for it,' said the King, 'that in this unequal scrimmage between thirty and seven or eight hundred men, a gunshot will not kill the Queen, my son, my daughter, or my sister?'

'If that misfortune happened,' answered Choiseul, 'as a result of following my advice, there would be nothing for me to do but to kill myself before your eyes.'

To which futile remark the King very sensibly answered: 'Let us reason calmly.'

It seems that information had now been brought as to the whereabouts of the Chevalier de Bouillé and Comte Charles de Raigecourt. The two young officers had been ordered by the Marquis de Bouillé to remain at their inn, the *Grand Monarque*, and wait for Goguelat, then after his arrival announcing the approach of the King, they were to carry the news to the Marquis de Bouillé who would be waiting between Dun and Stenay. In the event of the King being stopped in Varennes, Röhrig with his sixty hussars was to rescue him from the hands of the rebels. Obedient to orders the two officers had stayed at the inn, hearing nothing of the tumult until at last cries reached their ears

to the effect that the royal family were under arrest in the town.

Thereupon, at midnight, they set off across country to tell Bouillé what had happened, but Röhrig, instead of collecting his men, followed after them. His sixty hussars, left without a leader and scattered all over the town, rallied at the sound of the tocsin and the call to arms and, after being treated to drinks by the commander of the National Guards, went over to the side of the people.

However, Louis XVI still counted on Bouillé and, knowing that news of his capture had been taken to him, felt it would be better to await his arrival with the loyal regiment of Royal Allemand dragoons than to embark on a bloody combat round the door of Sauce's house. The young officers had started off at twelve o'clock, Dun was only twelve miles away, Bouillé might reasonably be expected to arrive at four or five o'clock in the morning. Thus, said the King, 'without any danger to my family and without any violence, we shall be able to go on with our journey in safety.'

But four o'clock passed and Bouillé had not arrived. Five o'clock struck, and the fugitives were beginning to despair when Captain Deslon appeared on the scene. In charge of troops at Dun he had met the two young officers on their way to Bouillé and, though they did not tell him what had happened because he was not in the secret of the flight, he guessed that the King had been stopped in Varennes, and on his own initiative set off with sixty hussars to rescue him. But on arrival at Varennes he found the bridge barricaded and was obliged to leave his men outside the town whilst he made his way alone to the house of Sauce.

By this time matters had grown worse; the tocsin had brought the peasants hurrying in from all over the countryside, and by five o'clock in the morning nearly 10,000 had collected. Deslon, then presenting himself before the King, asked for orders, but Louis XVI replied: 'I am a

prisoner, I can give no orders. Tell M. de Bouillé to do what he can, but I fear it can be nothing.'

All this time Choiseul, Damas and Goguelat had not remained completely inert. The two former had planned at the outset to rescue the royal family by force and at the risk of their own lives. But in order to succeed it was necessary to have the support of the troops, and the forty hussars who had returned from Pont de Sommeville were all that they could muster. Goguelat did his best with these, ranging them in battle order before the house of Sauce, but the National Guards were drawn up in double file along the street and two cannons had been placed near the bridge to defend the entrance, whilst two others pointed directly at the hussars, ready to sweep them away at the first display of force. Goguelat relates that he took possession of the guns and placed them in the charge of some of his hussars, that he did not attempt to remove the obstructions from the bridge, thinking the carriages could pass over the ford, and that at this stage he still believed the royal family might have escaped with safety. But as the hours went by the danger increased. So when Goguelat went into the house of Sauce and begged the Queen to persuade the King to start at once, she answered: 'I can take nothing on myself, it is for the King to give orders, my duty is to follow him; besides, M. de Bouillé cannot be long in arriving.'

Goguelat was of the same opinion, believing with the King that Bouillé might be expected between five and six in the morning. But only Deslon arrived at five, and after another hour of suspense there arrived at six o'clock, not Bouillé, but La Fayette's aide-de-camp, Romeuf, and a commander of the National Guard of Paris named Bayon, carrying a decree from the National Assembly ordering the King to return to Paris.

Romeuf, though devoted to La Fayette, was not disloyal and blushed at the part he was forced to play. Advancing towards the King and Queen with tears in his eyes, he told them he had not believed it possible that he could reach

them before they had arrived safely at their destination, that he had in fact travelled slowly in the hope of giving them time to make good their escape; then he attempted to justify La Fayette, assuring them that he was not their enemy.

'He is!' answered the Queen, 'he has no ideas beyond his United States and his American Republic. He will see what a French Republic will be like.' Then she went on: 'Well, monsieur, show me this decree you have brought.'

Romeuf handed it to her.

The King read it at the same time and then said with gentle resignation: 'So there is no King now in France.'

But the Queen, after looking at it, without reading to the end, threw it down, exclaiming: 'What insolence!' The paper fluttered on to the bed where the Dauphin and Madame Royale were still sleeping. Snatching it up again quickly she said: 'I do not wish it to soil the bed of my children!' and for once losing her self-control, she cast it angrily to the ground. But for the King she would have torn it in pieces.

Romeuf, with swimming eyes, said in an undertone: 'Would the Queen have liked anyone but me to be a witness of this?'

These words had the effect of calming her, and seeing that the young man was well disposed, she appealed to his good feelings by saying: 'At any rate, monsieur, I recommend Messieurs Damas, Choiseul and Goguelat to your care after we have gone.'

Romeuf promised to obey this command and saved their lives at the risk of his own.

The King, still counting on Bouillé, then played for time. Would it not be possible to wait till eleven o'clock? Romeuf would have asked nothing better, but Bayon was inexorable. Then at least the royal family and their attendants must be allowed to breakfast before starting? This much was granted and the whole party sat down to the meal, straining

their ears at every moment to hear the tumult announcing the arrival of Bouillé and his regiment of Royal Allemand.

Goguelat, who had not given up all hope of this longed-for event, went down to inspect his hussars and, finding them still standing firm, told them in his commanding voice to break up a disorderly mob that had collected outside the door. This was done instantly, and Goguelat, mounting his horse, determined to make a tour of inspection to see whether it would not still be possible for the King to escape. Although threatened with death by Drouet whom he encountered at that moment, he was about to start forth when he saw a crowd of people collected round the carriages that were waiting for the royal family. As he advanced with some of his hussars to disperse them a major of the National Guard, pistol in hand, confronted him, saying: 'If you take another step I will kill you!'

For answer Goguelat drew his sword; at the same moment the man fired twice in succession and Goguelat fell from his horse shot in the head and chest. Although not killed or mortally wounded, he had to be carried into a house near by and was put completely out of action.

Then the hussars, deprived of their leader, went over to the enemy.

All hope was now dead. Bouillé had not arrived, and the populace were clamouring for the departure of the royal family. In vain the King and Queen made a last appeal to Sauce for mercy, telling him of all they had to fear, assuring him that if they had not left Paris they would have been massacred by the party of the Duc d'Orléans, asking what was to become of them now? In vain Marie Antoinette pointed to her sleeping children, begging that their rest should not be disturbed; in vain one of her women simulated a violent attack of colic, throwing herself about in agony upon a chair so realistically that even the Queen was deceived and urged that she was not fit to travel; the tumult outside was growing louder and no further delay was possible.

So at about half-past seven in the morning the royal family entered the berline and the two carriages started on their terrible journey back to Paris.

What had happened to Bouillé? Another series of fatalities had occurred to delay his arrival. In the first place, hearing nothing of the King's arrival in the morning of the 22nd as he had expected, he had retired to Stenay, instead of remaining between that town and Dun. It was there that his son and de Raigecourt found him soon after four a.m., having taken four hours to cover the nine leagues from Varennes, owing to the darkness of the night, the bad state of the roads and their imperfect knowledge of the way to take. Bouillé thereupon called out the Royal Allemand Regiment, which took three-quarters of an hour to assemble, although their commander, the Baron de Mandel, had been ordered to have them ready to start at a moment's notice. It was thus five o'clock before Bouillé started, and the mountains being hard to cross he took four hours and a quarter to reach Varennes, arriving there at 9.30, about an hour and a half, he says, after the King had left for Paris.

Bouillé attributes the whole disaster to the delay in letting him know the King had been stopped in Varennes, but it seems that the two young officers started only half an hour later—at midnight—and, even if they had ridden faster, it is difficult to see how two hours would have been saved as Bouillé asserts. The worst blunder seems to have been committed by himself, in his unaccountable action of retiring to Stenay, instead of advancing towards Varennes in case of danger to the King. Had he remained near Dun, whence Deslon had been able to reach Varennes in less than two hours, his son and de Raigecourt, though starting at midnight, could have reached him before three o'clock, and even allowing for the delay in assembling the Royal Allemand, he could have been at Varennes by seven o'clock, just in time to save the royal family. As it was he seems to



have arrived not an hour and a half but two hours later, and although he and his son cast about for a short cut across country with a view to overtaking the berline and snatching the King from the hands of his captors, the way was found to be barred by a canal; besides, the royal family were escorted by some 6000 people and in the fray that would necessarily ensue might all be massacred. That this fate would have been preferable to the one they were destined to endure is possible, but no one could know that at the time.

Thus by a deplorable chain of accidents the whole carefully elaborated plan had broken down. If only the Queen had not lost her way on leaving the Tuileries, and Fersen had taken a direct route out of Paris, if only the berline had not broken down, the royal family would have arrived at Pont de Sommeville before Choiseul and Goguelat left—everything depended on this. Again, if the King had not been recognized at Châlons or shown his face at Sainte-Ménéhould, or if Drouet had been shot by Lagache, the alarm would not have been given at Varennes. If only Goguelat had told the King the relay was stabled in the lower town, or someone had been left on guard at the house in the upper town to direct him in case he arrived unexpectedly; if only the hussars had been placed under the command of an officer who was in the secret, the fugitives might have got through in spite of Drouet. If only Bouillé had not retired to Stenay, the royal family might yet have been rescued at the last minute. If only *one* of these contretemps had been avoided, all might have been well. But every mishap, every oversight played into the hands of their enemies; it was as if all the powers of darkness had combined for their destruction.

The journey back to Paris was terrible. No one, says Mme de Tourzel, can give any idea of the sufferings of the royal family—‘sufferings physical and moral, nothing was spared them.’ The heat of the weather, the dust from the roads combined with their fatigue after twenty-four hours’

travelling and the sleepless night of suspense at Varennes, were enough to shatter the strongest nervous system, but added to all this was the sense of failure, the ignominy of being led back captive by a horde of exulting men and women hardly less inhuman than those who had surrounded their carriage on the 6th of October. This escort changed continually, those who dropped out being replaced by fresh contingents from each village through which they passed, and in order that the people should keep pace with the carriages the postillions drove so slowly that the distance of twenty miles between Varennes and Sainte-Ménéhould, which they had covered in three and a half hours on the journey out, took no less than six on their return.

Close to Sainte-Ménéhould a horrible atrocity took place. An old royalist gentleman in the neighbourhood, the Comte de Dampierre, rode to meet the procession and expressed by the sorrow on his face the sympathy he felt for the royal family. The mob seeing this attacked him, a shot was fired into his side, then he was dragged from his horse and put to death with unspeakable barbarity. According to the account given by the Queen to Fersen, this incident occurred at a stopping place, and the crime of the old man was to have given his arm to one of the Queen's waiting-women to help her into the carriage; then after murdering him they brought his head in their hands, dripping with blood, to show it to the royal family, before carrying it on a pike in the procession.<sup>1</sup>

Châlons, where they arrived that evening, provided the first rest and also the first respite for forty-eight hours. For here they not only slept but met with respect and tears of sympathy from the loyal people of the town; young girls brought flowers to the Queen and asked to be allowed to serve her.

But next day brought fresh alarms; a battalion of ruffians, recruited by the clubs from Reims, arrived on the scene and

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 8; *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 301.

the royal family was hurried on to Épernay, where a hail of insults awaited them.

It was at this point that they were joined by three emissaries sent from Paris by the National Assembly to travel with them the rest of the way. These were Pétion, Barnave and Latour Maubourg.

The last named being a loyal man proposed that he should go in the carriage with the waiting-women, because, he explained, the King could be sure of him and it was necessary to win over the other two.

Barnave had begun his revolutionary career as an Orléaniste, and was known for his ferocity as 'the Tiger.' Virieu had met him in 1788 at Bellechasse in the thick of the conspiracy, consorting with intriguers of all kinds, bound together by a common hatred of the Queen. But now Barnave, like Mirabeau, was to repent his past rancour towards the woman he had so cruelly misjudged. It was Madame Elisabeth, however, who began his conversion. Talking gently as the berline rolled along on its way between Dormans and Meaux, she explained his own revolutionary sentiments to him in such a way as to flatter him by the trouble she had taken to 'psycho-analyse' him, and at the same time to make him feel rather foolish at finding he had been so mistaken with regard to the intentions of the King which Madame Elisabeth went on to develop at some length. Under these influences the once fiery revolutionary became quite mild, and when an attempt was made by the mob to repeat the incident of Sainte-Ménehould and murder a poor village priest who had seemed disposed to approach the berline with a view to showing his respect for the King, Barnave put his head out of the window and shouted: 'Tigers, have you ceased to be Frenchmen? Nation of brave men, have you become a nation of assassins?'

In his excitement he leant out so far that Madame Elisabeth grasped him lest he should fall into the road. Marie Antoinette, who even in the most tragic circumstances could never help seeing the funny side of things, said

afterwards that the sight of the pious Elisabeth hanging on to Barnave's coat tails was the most surprising she had ever seen.

Madame Elisabeth herself was quite amused; saint though she was, she had retained a sense of humour. And she was almost enjoying this strange adventure. 'Our journey with Barnave and Pétion went off in the most ridiculous way,' she wrote afterwards to Mme de Bombelles. 'You will think no doubt it was torture for us; not at all. They were all right, particularly the former, who is very clever and not at all ferocious as it is said. I began by giving them my frank opinion on their doings, and after that we talked the rest of the way as if the matter did not concern us.'<sup>1</sup>

But if Madame Elisabeth succeeded in appealing to Barnave's reason, it was Marie Antoinette who appealed to his heart. Was this indeed the Queen—the Queen of Versailles and of Trianon, the proud and arrogant 'Autrichienne'—this pale and shattered woman who sat in front of him, holding her little son on her knees, her eyes full of tears as she looked sadly out of the window, at first taking no part in the conversation? At the sight of such fallen greatness, endured with so much dignity and resignation, all that was chivalrous in Barnave's young and ardent nature rose in her defence; henceforth he was to think only of the way to save her from her enemies.

Whilst Barnave had been disarmed, not so Pétion. This large, rather corpulent man, good-looking—though not so handsome as he imagined, with his retreating forehead surmounted by elaborately frizzed hair—showed no pity for the sufferings of the royal family. Completely insensible rather than deliberately cruel, virtue and vice, beauty and ugliness, nobility and baseness were all one to him, and like his friend Robespierre, whose principles were identical with his own, he could contemplate the extermination of human beings with no more emotion than if they had been flies.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 26; Mercier, *Le Nouveau Paris*, ii. 15.

Pétion afterwards made himself supremely ridiculous by his account of this journey, in which he described Madame Elisabeth as falling a victim to his fascinations; in reality the royal family were as much repelled by him as they were attracted by Barnave. His first question was to ask Marie Antoinette, with a meaning glance, the name of the man who had driven the hired coach on the night of the flight from the Tuileries: was he not a Swede? The Queen replied coldly: 'I am not in the habit of knowing the names of hackney coachmen.'

When the King, joining after a while in the conversation, spoke of the political situation and the necessity of giving him power to carry out the Constitution 'since France could not be a Republic,' adding: 'Although we all know you would like to have one,' Pétion replied insolently: 'Not yet, the French are not ripe for it and I shall not be fortunate enough to see it established in my lifetime.' After this the King spoke to him no more.

Pétion's manners throughout the journey were revolting. During the meals taken in the carriage he ate and drank disgustingly, throwing chicken bones out of the window almost into the face of the King, and jerking his glass upward without a word when Madame Elisabeth poured out wine for him, as a sign that it was enough.<sup>1</sup>

At one moment he took the Dauphin on his knees and amused himself winding his fair curls so tightly round his fingers that the little boy cried out in pain.

'Give me back my son,' said the Queen, 'he is accustomed to be treated with care and consideration which have not fitted him for such familiarities.'

The Dauphin was suffering greatly from the effects of the two long journeys and the emotions through which they had all passed. At Dormans, where the royal family had spent the night, the King had only been able to doze for three hours in a straw armchair, but the little Dauphin had been put to bed and had gone to sleep. But the savage cries

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 295; Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, I. 339.

he had heard throughout the day had made such an impression on him that he dreamt he was in a wood full of wolves who were about to attack the Queen, and awoke sobbing with fright. He could only be comforted by being taken to his mother, and seeing that she was safe he went calmly to sleep again. Strange presage! the fate he had dreamt of as befalling the Queen was to overtake Pétion who, proscribed with the Girondistes two years later, was to fly for his life and to be found dead in a wood with his body half eaten by wolves.

As the royal family drew nearer Paris their sufferings increased; the heat and dust became intolerable, and in order that the people might see them better they were obliged to keep the windows down. At La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, where they stopped for dinner, they enjoyed, however, a moment's solace. Regnard, the mayor of the town, who entertained them, had provided everything for their comfort, and the Queen, who arrived travel-stained, covered with white dust and burned by the sun, was received with great respect by Mme Regnard.

'You are no doubt the mistress of the house?' asked Marie Antoinette.

'I was, before your Majesty entered it,' answered the good woman with a bow, and wearing a cook's apron, she insisted on waiting on the Queen herself throughout the meal.

Marie Antoinette, deeply touched, said to the Dauphin on leaving: 'My son, thank madame for her attentions and tell her I shall never forget them.' And the little boy said instantly: 'Maman thanks you for all the care you have had for us and I love you very much for having given pleasure to Maman.'

The last day of the journey, Saturday, June 25, was the worst of all. The heat inside the crowded berline was suffocating. Leaving Meaux, where they spent the night, at half-past six in the morning, they did not reach Paris until eight in the evening, and after passing Bondy they were met by hordes of harridans, of the kind that had threatened

their lives on the 6th of October, shouting filthy insults at the Queen. At this the Dauphin screamed with terror and Marie Antoinette with streaming eyes attempted to reassure him.

The entry into Paris was the climax to the four days of misery they had endured since leaving Varennes. Dense crowds were collected in the Champs Élysées, and whilst the berline—the ‘hearse of the monarchy’ as Fréron described it—covered with dust and laden with people who had climbed on to the steps and anywhere they could find a foothold, made its way slowly through the ranks of spectators, not a sound was heard, for placards imposed silence with the words: ‘Whoever applauds the King will be beaten; whoever insults him will be hanged.’ At the same time everyone was ordered to keep his hat on, and waiters, accustomed to go bareheaded, had covered their heads with napkins in obedience to this order. Behind the two carriages of the royal family followed a chariot decked with laurels, in which stood Drouet and Guillaume crowned with oak-leaves, who were greeted with frenzy by the crowd.

So the royal family passed through the Place Louis XV, where two years later their sufferings were to end, and entered by the swing-bridge into the garden of the Tuileries. But this too was crowded with people no longer silent, for yells of fury broke out on all sides, directed mainly against the Queen and the unhappy *gardes du corps*, who were all three squeezed on to the box, so tightly as to give the impression that they were chained together, between two grenadiers guarding them with fixed bayonets seated on boards that had been fastened on either side. Such was the rage they excited that it seemed doubtful whether they would reach the Château alive, and the moment the berline stopped before the door the crowd made a rush, and seizing the *gardes du corps* by the hair, dragged them to the ground and pelted them with blows. Only the intervention of Barnave prevented their being massacred on the spot. Order and silence having been restored, Louis XVI descended from

the berline. All heads remained covered; only one man, M. de Guilhermy, a deputy of the noblesse, took off his hat, bowing respectfully to the King. Instantly the cry went up: 'Put on your hat!' For answer, de Guilhermy threw it away from him far into the crowd and so was able to stand bravely, bareheaded before his sovereign, regardless of the imprecations hurled at him from every side.

Louis XVI re-entered the Château perfectly calm; but the Queen, who next descended from the carriage, was so weak and exhausted that she could hardly stand; the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Vicomte de Noailles came forward to help her to the door. But disdaining the assistance of her enemies she took the arm of a deputy of the Right who was standing near, and with head held high walked back into the prison she had left so full of hope only five days earlier.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE CONSTITUTION

WHILST that most tragic act in the drama of the monarchy was being played out at Varennes, what had been happening in Paris? Apparently nothing was known of the flight until seven o'clock in the morning of the 21st when the servants, calling the royal family as usual, found their beds empty. According to Weber it was Mme Rochereuil, the perfidious *femme de garde-robe*, who first gave the alarm to Gouvion or La Fayette. The news went round quickly, the tocsin rang out, drums beat the *générale*, and by the time La Fayette reached the Château a vast crowd had collected, threatening him with death for allowing their prey to escape them. La Fayette now endured the penalty attaching to his rôle of 'Facing-both-ways'; on the one hand the revolutionaries reproached him with conniving at the escape in order to save the royal family; on the other, the royalists declared that he had only allowed them to go on their way in order to enjoy the triumph of a sensational recapture.

Meanwhile the Orléanistes were secretly delighted, seeing in the flight of the King the opportunity to declare that he had abdicated and to place their candidate on the throne. The Duc himself was amongst the group of deputies from the Assembly who watched the arrival of the royal family at the Tuileries, looking on at their humiliation. At the first news of the flight he had driven about Paris in his 'English cart,' with a smile on his lips, hoping to be acclaimed by the people. No popular movement, however, took place in his favour; only through the clubs, controlled by the Orléanistes, his partisans were able to carry on their manœuvres. The Club des Cordeliers attempted a rising which would

lead to the assassination of La Fayette; at the Jacobin Club, on June 23, Laclos demanded the deposition of Louis XVI. The suggestion of a Republic, heard for the first time, met with violent opposition. The leading revolutionaries still aimed only at a change of dynasty.

The Manifesto Louis XVI had left behind on his flight, which was read aloud to the Assembly on the morning of the 21st, showed that far from abdicating he had every intention of continuing to reign over France and to reign constitutionally. This 'Declaration of the King addressed to all the French on his leaving Paris' has been so misrepresented that it is essential to quote certain passages verbatim. Although evidently written in great distress of mind, lacking in consecutiveness and rambling off here and there into minor issues, it is far from being the weak and foolish document that his enemies have made it appear. It begins with these words:

'Whilst the King could hope to see order and the happiness of the nation re-established through the means employed by the National Assembly, and by his residence near this Assembly in the capital of the kingdom, he did not count the cost of any personal sacrifice. He would not even have discussed the nullity with which the complete absence of liberty has stultified every step he has taken since the month of October 1789, if this hope had been fulfilled. But to-day, when the only reward of so many sacrifices is to see the monarchy destroyed, all authority unrecognized, property violated, personal safety everywhere endangered, crime unpunished and complete anarchy reigning over law, without the semblance of authority given him by the new Constitution sufficing to repair a single one of the ills that desolate the kingdom; the King, after having solemnly protested against all the acts that have emanated from him during his captivity, feels it his duty to place before the eyes of the French and of the whole universe the picture of his conduct and that of the government which has established itself in the kingdom.'

Louis XVI then went on to recapitulate the outrages that had been committed and the indignities to which he had been subjected since July 1789—the crimes of October 5 and 6, his forced captivity at the Tuileries, the attack on the Archbishop of Paris, the recent riot at Vincennes and the action of the crowd in preventing his going to Saint-Cloud to convalesce after his illness. He spoke of the seditious activities of the clubs and of the ‘Amis de la Constitution,’ the infamies of the pamphlets and libels put out by the press, the destruction of the good spirit that had formerly prevailed in the army and navy. At the same time he reminded the nation of the sacrifices he had made and his concessions to popular outcry—the removal of the troops from Paris in July 1789, the suppression of his *gardes du corps*, the retrenchments effected in his household, the double representation of the Tiers État, the proposals he had put forward at the Séance Royale of June 23. Finally he showed that the Assembly had violated its own Constitution since ‘in contempt of the principal clauses in their *cahiers* which stipulated that the laws should be made in concert with the King’ the Assembly had ‘put the King entirely outside the Constitution by refusing him the right of sanction to the articles which it regards as constitutional’; thus ‘respect for the King is nothing but a vain semblance of royalty.’

‘Frenchmen,’ he said, ‘is this what you intended when you sent your deputies to the Assembly? Did you wish that the anarchy and the despotism of the clubs should replace the monarchic government under which the nation has prospered throughout 1400 years? Did you wish to see your King overwhelmed with outrages and deprived of his liberty whilst he was only seeking to establish yours?’

Certainly the nation did not wish it, and had they been able to reply would have declared with one voice that the present state of affairs was not of their making; not only the rising of La Vendée but the countless men and women of the people butchered all over France as ‘counter-revolutionaries’ two years later showed how profoundly monarchic

the nation was at heart. But the true people were no less in shackles than the King; only the rabble of Paris and the provincial towns could make their voices heard. Democracy had been crushed beneath the double tyranny of demagoguery and ochlocracy.

Louis XVI ended his Manifesto with an eloquent appeal:

‘Frenchmen, and above all you, Parisians, inhabitants of a town which his Majesty’s ancestors found pleasure in calling the good town of Paris, beware of the suggestions and lies of your false friends; come back to your King, he will always be your father and your best friend; with what pleasure will he forget all personal injuries and find himself in your midst again, when a Constitution which he has freely accepted ensures that our holy religion shall be respected, that government shall be established on a stable footing, and through its operation no one shall be troubled in their goods or their condition, that laws shall no longer be infringed with impunity, and finally that liberty shall be established on firm and unshakable foundations.’

Signed: Louis.

Paris, June 20, 1791.

This letter, written at a moment when the King believed he was about to regain his liberty, must be regarded as the true expression of his feelings, and clearly shows what attitude he proposed to take up once he was safely entrenched at Montmédy and free to express his opinion on the Constitution. Had he only reached his destination safely the whole subsequent history of the world might have been changed. For not only the fate of France but of all civilization depended on that venture. By arresting the Revolution at this stage endless disasters might have been averted—the massacres of September, the Reign of Terror, the unrest in which France has tossed from that day to this, perhaps also the succeeding outbreaks of world revolution inspired by that earlier precedent which are still shaking the foundations of the civilized world.

After the capture of the royal family at Varennes everyone

blamed everyone else for the failure of the flight, Bouillé blamed Goguelat and Choiseul, Choiseul and Fersen blamed Bouillé; only the King blamed no one. Thus on July 3 he wrote to Bouillé:

'You have done your duty, monsieur, cease from reproaching yourself. You have dared everything for me and my family and you have not succeeded; God has permitted circumstances which paralysed your courage and your measures. Success depended on me, but civil war fills me with horror (me fait horreur) and I did not wish to shed the blood of my subjects whether misled or loyal. My fate is bound with that of the nation and I do not want to reign by violence.'<sup>1</sup>

It is said, however, to have been now that Louis XVI at last realized something of the truth about the Orléaniste-Masonic conspiracy in which he had refused to believe when warned in 1780. After his return from Varennes, wrote Barruel, the scales fell from his eyes, and to one of his confidants he said with bitter regret: 'Why did I not believe, eleven years ago, what I am experiencing to-day? For everything was then foretold me.'<sup>2</sup>

How truly did Lombard de Langres write: 'Kings slumber on their thrones, and even were they to awake! . . . it is too late!!!'<sup>3</sup>

The Queen's first thought on re-entering the Tuileries was to sink into clean water and wash away all traces of the dust and heat she had endured during the dreadful return journey from Varennes. Whilst enjoying the moment of relief she dictated to her gentleman usher a few words to Mme Campan, who was still away on holiday:

'I have this instant arrived and have just entered my bath. I exist, as also my family. I have suffered much. . . . Hope for happier times.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Bouillé, *Souvenirs et Fragments*, i. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires sur le Jacobinisme*, II. 333; IV. 299.

<sup>3</sup> *Des Sociétés Secrètes en Allemagne* (1819), p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Campan, p. 470.

To Fersen Marie Antoinette wrote in much the same way, saying: 'Be reassured; we are alive. The leaders of the Assembly appear anxious to behave with gentleness. Speak to my relations about possible steps to be taken from outside; if they are afraid one must come to terms with them.'<sup>1</sup>

This brief note, without beginning or ending, and with no erasures, is the first known letter written by the Queen to Fersen and begins the correspondence, extending from the date of June 28, 1791, to August 1, 1792, around which so much controversy has raged. On June 29, Marie Antoinette wrote again, this time a letter in which several sentences were deleted and replaced by dots in the published correspondence:

'I exist . . . how anxious I have been about you and how I pity you for all you are suffering in having no news of us! Heaven will permit this to reach you. Do not write to me, it would endanger us, and above all, do not come back here under any pretext. They know that it was you who got us out of here; everything would be lost if you appeared. We are closely watched night and day; that is all one to me. . . . Set your mind at rest, nothing will happen to me. The Assembly wishes to treat us gently. Good-bye. . . . I shall not be able to write to you again.'<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, is an example of the erasures which have been held to conceal words of love.<sup>3</sup> But why should they? After the flight to Varennes there must have been any number of things that had to be kept secret and could be confided to Fersen alone. It is absurd to judge letters written in these difficult and dangerous days by the rules of everyday life.

A point out of which great capital has been made is that the erasures occur most often at the beginning or end of the letters, a circumstance which might appear significant to people who fail to realize that in eighteenth-century France it was not the custom, except in formal correspondence, to

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 152.

<sup>3</sup> An example of the way in which these erasures were made can be seen in one letter of the vanished correspondence which was reproduced in photostat by the Baron de Klinckowstrom, *ibid.*, ii. 110.

use any method of address in beginning a letter or any formula when ending it; the writer plunged straightaway into what he or she had to say and ended with the same abruptness, often without even a signature. The most impassioned love-letters of the day—those of Julie de Lespinasse, of the Chevalier de Boufflers and Mme de Sabran—frequently contain no terms of endearment in the opening or closing lines.

In the case of Marie Antoinette's correspondence with Fersen there is, however, a reason why certain matter should be found most frequently at the beginning or end, a reason which may be added to the explanation of the erasures given by Baron de Klinckowström. No doubt, as he pointed out, they concealed political secrets, but the most secret passages of all would relate to methods of communication, and these would naturally occur in the opening lines acknowledging receipt of a letter through a certain channel and in the closing lines saying how the next letter will be conveyed. Thus, in a non-deleted passage, Marie Antoinette begins by referring to the invisible ink she is using, in another by mentioning a code letter of the alphabet, in a third she begins with the words: 'They gave me your letter written *en clair* after having brought out the writing, this is the second time it has happened. We must take other measures,' etc. Now there is clear evidence that Fersen frequently had occasion to pass the Queen's letters on to other people, but not always. When he did this he would be careful to erase those passages which might have a bad political effect or which referred to means of communication and had no bearing on the informative matter of the letter; when he did not pass them on he would leave such passages intact. Hence we find that the communication instructions which are not erased occur in much the same places as most of the erasures in the other letters, indeed, in one case, we shall notice that such instructions appear between two 'adieux' just as do some erasures.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i 306,

Further, if the deleted passages had contained the terms of endearment with which, in our day, lovers usually begin and end, would they not occur habitually instead of only on occasion? As it is, a number of the letters begin and end on a purely political note but contain erasures in the middle. The position of the erasures thus has no significance beyond the probability that when they occur at the beginning or end they conceal communication instructions, and in the middle political secrets. Indeed in the majority of cases the context clearly shows the deleted passage to have referred to one or the other. Thus:

'Without help from abroad we shall do nothing [four lines erased] . . . but the paper of which I spoke to you at the beginning will only be sent off to-morrow.'<sup>1</sup>

'When my letters have a second n after having first written, it will be the first volume of . . . in all letters.'<sup>2</sup>

'This is the condition of the different objects that I have in hand. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

'I received your letter of the 25th . . . No. 11;'<sup>4</sup>

There may, however, have been matters of a more intimate kind intended for Fersen's ear alone, such as the question of the King's health. Although we know that his recurring attacks of acute depression and actual nervous breakdown caused the Queen great anxiety, not one word of this appears in her letters to Fersen. Nothing, of course, would have been more dangerous than that any rumours of disability on the part of Louis XVI should reach the Powers of Europe or the émigrés and provide the Comte de Provence with a further pretext for proclaiming himself Regent, and Fersen would be careful to block out any such allusions. Thus when Marie Antoinette writes: 'You say nothing of your health. Mine is good . . . the French are atrocious on every side,'<sup>5</sup> it is easy to imagine that the passage may have read: 'Mine is good but the King's has given way again, and no wonder, for the French are

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 289.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 220.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 209.



atrocious on every side.' Or again: 'How is your health? I'll wager you take no care of yourself, and you are wrong. . . . As for me I keep up better than I ought.'<sup>1</sup> Here the Queen may well have written: 'You are wrong, for if you fall ill whom shall I depend on since the King is not in a state to be consulted?'

There are in reality any number of hypotheses why erasures should have been made; the same reason cannot apply to them all. By nature outspoken, Marie Antoinette may have allowed her pen to run away with her and lead her into indiscreet remarks about people, or perhaps into teasing references to Mrs. Sullivan—which Fersen would certainly expunge. She herself recognizes this danger when she says: 'Good-bye. I am tired out with writing; never have I had to follow such a profession and I am always afraid of forgetting something or of saying something stupid (*de mettre quelques bêtises*).'<sup>2</sup> Is it not possible that, finding she had committed some indiscretion, she may have scratched the passage out rather than rewrite the whole letter? Hence some of the famous erasures may have been made by Marie Antoinette herself!

It is, however, incredible that any woman, particularly one with the intelligence of Marie Antoinette and with the political sense she had now developed, would have been so foolish as continually to introduce words of love into letters dealing with affairs of State which she knew might have to be passed on, *when it would have been so simple to write them on a separate sheet of paper.*

Moreover, the tone of Fersen's replies is all against any such hypothesis. Entirely political and almost without erasures, they contain nothing that can be interpreted as a response to affectionate remarks. It has been pointed out that his mode of address is unceremonious, all such terms as 'your Majesty' or even 'Madame' being omitted, but this was only a matter of prudence in a correspondence where all names were avoided, and it was urgent that, in

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 213.



*Photo : Bulloz*

MARIE ANTOINETTE IN 1791

*from the unfinished Pastel Portrait by Kucharski in the Collection of the duc des Cars.  
(Note the bayonet holes made in the canvas by the revolutionaries)*



case of a letter falling into the wrong hands, it should not be known to whom it was addressed. Nowhere, however, is there the least suggestion of familiarity; Fersen writes as a confidant and mentor, privileged to give advice, which he does in a somewhat didactic manner, but when on rare occasions the personal note is introduced, his feelings are always expressed in terms of the most chivalrous respect. Thus, in the letter he writes after the return from Varennes which relates solely to the political situation and contains no erasures, he contents himself with saying: 'I am well and only live to serve you.'<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to imagine that he would have replied in this way to impassioned declarations of love or that the Queen would have continued to make such declarations if they had met with no warmer response. If it is suggested that his replies were conveyed in more secret notes intended for the Queen's eyes alone, then again we may ask, why did Marie Antoinette not adopt the same method instead of introducing fond words between passages relating to the Emperor and the King of Prussia and giving Fersen the trouble of laboriously deleting them before passing them on to Gustavus III and other people in whose minds they would naturally excite suspicion? Obviously the people in question must have understood the necessity for these erasures, which in those days were nothing unusual and occur in other secret correspondence besides that of Marie Antoinette and Fersen. Thus erasures are to be found in Fersen's letters to Gustavus III<sup>2</sup> and in the Queen's to the Duchesse de FitzJames<sup>3</sup>; M. de Nolhac has reproduced in photostat one of the latter where, in the middle of a sentence relating to the Duchesse's daughter, two lines are heavily erased.<sup>4</sup> At that perilous time there were many things that had to be kept secret.

If erasures occur more frequently in Marie Antoinette's letters to Fersen than to other people it is perfectly com-

<sup>1</sup> Klinkowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 75, 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 230, 244.

<sup>4</sup> De Nolhac, *Autour de la Reine*, p. 104.

prehensible, since Fersen was her chief confidant and all her most secret plans were communicated to him. In the circle of confederates concerned with plans of escape or rescue, Fersen and the Queen were the only two who fully trusted each other; in fact, on several occasions, one warns the other that this or that member of the confederacy only knows so much and no more. In the matter of important details Fersen and the Queen alone were masters of the situation.

After his dry political letter of June 27 Fersen does not seem to have written again for two months, and Marie Antoinette could not imagine what had become of him. In her anxiety she wrote on August 11 to her friend, Count Valentin Esterhazy, speaking of her isolated position, separated from all her friends, receiving no news of them, and adding: 'If you write to him be sure to tell him that many leagues and many countries can never separate hearts; I feel this truth more every day.'

On September 5 she wrote again:

'I am delighted to find this opportunity to send you a little ring that will surely give you pleasure. They have been sold in prodigious quantities during the last three days and one has all the difficulty in the world to find them.<sup>1</sup> The one surrounded with paper is for him, it will just fit him; I wore it two days before packing it. Tell him it is from me. I do not know where he is; it is a dreadful torment to have no news and not even to know where the people one is fond of (*qu'on aime*) are living.'<sup>2</sup>

These letters have again been quoted as evidence that there was a liaison between Marie Antoinette and Fersen, and that Esterhazy being in the secret, the Queen did not hesitate to confide in him on the subject. But in reality, what do they prove? Nothing more than that she had a great affection for him. That a captive Queen should send

<sup>1</sup> These rings were of gold, bearing the royalist device *Domine, salve fac regem et reginam*. Geffroy. *Gustave III*, ii. 458.

<sup>2</sup> Preface by M. Ernest Daudet to the *Mémoires du Comte Valentin d'Esterhazy* (1905), pp. xxxiv, xxxv.

royalist rings to two of her oldest and most faithful friends is nothing extraordinary, that she should have referred to Fersen as 'him' was only in accordance with the plan of avoiding all names in writing. As to the words 'qu'on aime,' *aimer* is a verb that in French is capable of a very wide interpretation, for it may mean either to like, to be fond of, to love with affection or to be in love with. It cannot have been in the last sense that Marie Antoinette employed it here, since she applies it in the plural—'les gens qu'on aime'—that is to say, her friends in general, those she was fond of or loved with sincere affection. If she had used it in an amorous sense of one whom Esterhazy knew to be her lover, would she not have said, 'celui qu'on aime'?

Fersen's silence at this moment was certainly not due to any waning of interest in the Queen's cause, for he was engaged on a secret mission to Vienna, where he had been sent by Gustavus III to discuss fresh plans with the Emperor for the rescue of the royal family of France. So secret was it that, as Marie Antoinette writes, none of his friends could tell her where he was and, the usual means of communication being cut off, he had not been able to write to her for some weeks. But all the while he was devoting himself to her service.

The failure of the flight to Montmédy had been a bitter blow to him. 'All is lost, my dear father,' he wrote to Field-Marshal Fersen on June 23, 'and I am in despair. The King was stopped at Varennes, 16 leagues from the frontier. Judge of my grief and pity me.'

The planning of the journey had indeed been the great adventure of his life. Apart from his devotion to Marie Antoinette and his chivalrous desire to save her, the triumph of rescuing the King and Queen of France from their captivity was an exploit that would have covered him with glory in the eyes of all Europe and led to who knows what brilliant prospects in the future. The disaster of their arrest at Varennes was thus the crowning disappointment of his career, and his only thought was to make up for it by

fresh efforts on their behalf. The plan of his secret mission to Vienna was no doubt conveyed in a letter he wrote the Queen on August 28, which took some weeks to arrive, for on September 26 she writes: 'Your letter of the 28th has reached me. For two months I have had no news of you; no one could tell me where you were.' And further on she says: 'As soon as you are back in Brussels let me know; I will write to you quite simply, for I have a safe way always at my command.'<sup>1</sup>

At this point we come to the famous love-letter referred to in an earlier chapter (see ante, p. 159) which, *although not in the Queen's writing*, was attributed to her by its discoverer, M. Lucien Maury. According to M. Maury, it was written in September 1791; Mlle Söderhjelm, however, places it two months earlier, saying that Fersen received it on July 4 of that year, and introduces it at that date as if it were one of recognized authenticity. So much has been made of this famous fragment that it must be given here in the original French:

'... je peux vous dire que je vous aime et je n'ai même le temps que de cela. . . . Je me porte bien, ne soyez pas inquiet de moi. Je voudrais bien vous savoir de même. Écrivez moi en chiffre par la poste: l'adresse à M. de Brouvne, une double enveloppe à M. Gougeno. Faites mettre les adresses par votre valet de chambre. Mandez à qui je dois adresser celles que je pourrai vous écrire, car je ne peux plus vivre sans cela. Adieu le plus aimé et le plus aimant des hommes. Je vous embrasse de tout mon cœur.'

We have only to compare this with the letters known to have been written by Marie Antoinette to Fersen at either of the dates assigned to it—the last days of June or September 1791—in order to see the absurdity of attributing them to the same writer. Apart from the complete difference in style, the contents do not tally.<sup>2</sup> The writer of the Maury

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 193.

<sup>2</sup> On this point see article by M. Henri Welschinger in the *Journal des Débats* for September 13, 1907.

fragment appears to have been aware of Fersen's whereabouts, begs him to write to her, gives him elaborate instructions about the way of getting letters to her, telling him to write in cipher and asking where she is to address letters to him.

In the letters of recognized authenticity, however, the Queen, on June 29, asks Fersen not to write to her and says she will not be able to write to him again; then, writing to him for the first time after this, on September 26, she acknowledges a letter from him, says she has not known for two months where he was, but neither gives nor asks instructions about means of communication. Fersen had evidently broken his long silence by telling the Queen where he was and giving an address for her to write to; once he was back in Brussels she knew perfectly well how to communicate with him, there was no need to make arrangements on this point or to tell him to write in cipher, since a cipher was in use between them as a matter of course. The Maury fragment, if not a complete fake, can therefore only have been addressed to Fersen by some woman who was anxious to start a correspondence with him. In this connection the name of Mme de Saint-Priest instantly suggests itself; as the wife of the King's Minister, in the secret of Fersen's efforts to save the royal family, she might well have been in a position to obtain the Queen's cipher. Her letters to Fersen, published by Mlle Söderhjelm, were in fact written at this very moment, June 1791, and contain phrases closely resembling those contained in the Maury fragment. It is clear that she had not heard from Fersen, since she writes: '*je n'ai aucune nouvelle de vous,*' and he had evidently ordered her not to speak of love to him for, she says: '*J'ai fait ce pénible effort pour vous obéir.*' But she goes on to assure him of her devotion. '*Je vous prie de vous souvenir quelques fois d'une femme qui vous a toujours bien tendrement aimé. Adieu, mon bien cher comte, je vous embrasse mille fois en vous faisant mes adieux . . . vous ne quittez jamais ma pensée; tout s'y rapporte et je n'existe que pour*



elle. . . .’ At the same time she speaks of not being able to write to him again, hence perhaps the necessity for a cyphered note written clandestinely and in haste. Compare all this with the words of the Maury fragment: ‘Mandez à qui je dois adresser celles que je pourrai vous écrire, car je ne peux plus vivre sans cela. . . . Je vous embrasse de tout mon cœur’; and it will be seen that both in style and in contents it resembles far more closely the correspondence of Mme de Saint-Priest than of Marie Antoinette.

At any rate, whoever was the writer of this letter, whether a woman friend of Fersen’s or a forger of documents, it would be absurd to accept it as an authentic letter of Marie Antoinette’s. Let us consider the matter judicially: a writer strongly hostile to the Queen is allowed to hunt amongst Fersen’s papers, asserts that he has found confirmation of his aspersions on her character in the form of a note which no one before had ever seen, produces a fragment neither written nor signed by her, and this is to be regarded as proof? What court of law would consider such evidence for a moment? And why a fragment? Why not the whole letter? Considering the importance of this so-called discovery, the only written expression of love for Fersen which has ever been attributed to Marie Antoinette, why has it not been reproduced in photostat with a key to the cipher so that its authenticity might be examined? But as far as I am able to discover, the famous fragment has never even been submitted to experts and rests on the testimony of M. Lucien Maury alone. What conclusion then can we draw but that it would not bear examination?

So to return to Fersen’s activities. It was not until October 10 that he wrote again to Marie Antoinette saying: ‘Here I am back again’—in Brussels.<sup>1</sup> After this several lines are erased which probably explained where he had been, the reason for his long silence and the business on which he had been engaged in Vienna, for not a word about all this appears in the rest of the letter. All that he says of

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 193.

his sentiments relates to his desire to serve the *Queen and the King*. Thus, on October 25 he writes again, saying that he has been accused of ambition in devoting himself to their service, adding:

'They are right, I had the ambition to serve you and all my life I shall regret not having succeeded; I wished to repay a part of the obligations that it is so pleasing to me to owe you, and I wanted to show them that one can be attached to people like you (*des gens comme vous*) without any other (motive of) interest. The rest of my conduct will have proved to them that was my only ambition, and that the glory of having served you (*servis*—i.e., both the King and Queen) was my dearest recompense.'<sup>1</sup>

It will surely be admitted that these are hardly the terms in which a man would write to his mistress and one for whom Mlle Söderhjelm would have us believe he entertained scant respect.

The correspondence that passed between Marie Antoinette and Fersen was thus essentially of a secret political kind; to describe it as an exchange of love-letters would be absurd. If affection, even in the sense of friendship, played any part in it, it was incidental to its general purpose.

After the return of the royal family from Varennes the Masonic conspiracy for the destruction of all thrones and altars began to supersede the Orléaniste plot for a mere change of dynasty. A spirit of republicanism now made itself felt in the Assembly and still more at the Jacobin Club, where henceforth the word 'Jacobin' came to denote those who wished to overthrow monarchic government. Both factions, however, combined in representing the King's letter of June 20 as a repudiation of the whole Constitution and in demanding that he should be deposed. A petition was drawn up at the Jacobin Club declaring that 'Louis XVI, after accepting the functions of royalty and having sworn to defend the Constitution, had deserted the post

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, 1. 202.

confided to him and had protested in a declaration written and signed by his hand against that same Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

This petition had been composed by Laclos, secretary of the Duc d'Orléans, in collaboration with Pétion, Buzot, and Brissot, who now veered towards the plan of a republic, and it was with difficulty that Brissot persuaded Laclos not actually to name the Duc d'Orléans as the successor to Louis XVI. The document was carried about the streets and into the cafés where men, women and even children were ordered either by threats or cajoleries to sign it. These methods having failed to win over a sufficient number of the public, the agitators resorted to violence and riots took place which were speedily repressed by the National Guards under La Fayette. But on Sunday, July 17, the agitators succeeded in collecting a vast crowd around them in the Champ de Mars with the object of persuading them to sign another petition to the same effect drawn up by the so-called 'popular societies.' With a view to inspiring terror they opened proceedings by murdering two harmless individuals—an old soldier and a wigmaker—who were found sitting beneath the steps of the altar, animated by no counter-revolutionary intentions; but heads were required to be carried on pikes according to the usual revolutionary custom and theirs happened to be at hand. The National Guards, however, drove the murderers away with their horrible trophies, and La Fayette, arriving on the scene, realized that the time had come to proclaim martial law—a procedure adopted from England and accompanied by the hoisting of the red flag.

Bailly, the mayor, with several members of the municipality, and La Fayette, who had assembled a considerable force of National Guards, then took up their positions on the Champ de Mars with the red flag carried before them. Immediately they were greeted with a hail of stones by the mob, and a pistol was fired at Bailly, the bullet passing close to his head. The National Guards fired into the air, and the

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Séances des Jacobins*, iii. 20.

mob, taking this mild form of reprisal for weakness, redoubled their violence; finally the soldiers, exasperated at their rôle of unresponsive targets, without waiting for orders, opened fire on the crowd. The effect was magical; the crowd took to their heels in all directions and in an instant the whole vast square was cleared.

This classical example of the way to deal with murderous mobs was graphically described by an eye-witness, Gouverneur Morris, who observed afterwards to Talleyrand that: 'Since the frolic of the Champ de Mars there is little danger of riots because the people are not very fond of them when they find that *death is a game which two can play at.*'<sup>1</sup>

If only Louis XVI had appreciated the truth of this axiom, instead of imagining that violence could be overcome by gentleness, what seas of blood would have been saved! For the riot, described by the agitators as the 'Massacre of the Champ de Mars,' the only one during the entire course of the Revolution when force was employed to put down disorder, not merely had the effect of stopping riots in Paris, but scattered the revolutionary leaders in all directions and prevented any serious outbreak for nearly a year.

But the time was now approaching when the King would be called upon to place his signature to the Constitution which, although he had been falsely accused of repudiating *in toto*, he could not honestly approve in detail. In his letter of June 20 he had merely submitted it to the criticism which in time every sane mind brought to bear on it.

It is only necessary to read this famous Constitution of 1791 for oneself in order to realize that it was completely unworkable—a medley of conflicting principles. Thus, whilst the government is throughout declared to be monarchic and one clause states that 'the executive power is delegated to the King, to be exercised under his authority through Ministers and other responsible agents,' another declares that: 'Sovereignty is one, indivisible, inalienable and imprescriptible. It belongs to the nation; no section

<sup>1</sup> *Diary and Letters*, i. 491.

of the people, no individual can attribute to itself the power to exercise it.'

At the same time stupendous tasks were apportioned to the King and vast power was apparently to be conferred on him. His sanction was to be required for the decrees of the Assembly, though, as we saw on October 5, 1789, when he attempted to act on this clause, he was told that he was not required to sanction laws but only to promulgate them. Then he was to conduct all foreign policy: 'The King alone can carry on political relations outside the country . . . make preparations for war—distribute the forces on land or sea . . . ' but he was not to have the right of declaring war. Again: 'The King is the supreme head of the general administration of the kingdom: the care of watching over the maintenance of order and public tranquillity is confided to him.'

This, whilst the unhappy monarch was kept a prisoner in his own palace, surrounded perpetually by revolutionary mobs threatening his life, and France had passed into a state of anarchy against which he had vainly protested again and again!

The articles of the Constitution relating to the general administration of the kingdom were hardly less illogical and incompatible with ordered government, whether monarchic or otherwise. Thus whilst the first article of the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man,' forming the preamble to the Constitution, lays down the axiom that: 'Men are born and remain free and equal in rights,' the Constitution states that no person in receipt of wages is to enjoy the rights of what is described as 'an active citizen (*citoyen actif*).' All forms of nobility, hereditary distinctions and orders of chivalry are to be done away with, and the only 'superiority' is to be that of 'public functionaries' who are apparently to be allowed to violate the law of equality and form a vast bureaucracy. Even Saint-Just perceived the impossibility of combining this with any form of monarchic government, for, as he pointed out some three years later, the ruin of the

Court entailed the ruin of the monarchy, since 'no royalty can exist without a patriciate.'<sup>1</sup>

At the same time all 'coalitions of workmen,' or as we should say to-day, trade unions, were suppressed by an article founded on the decree known as the 'Loi Chapelier,' passed on June 14, 1791, which declared that: 'The annihilation of all kinds of corporations of citizens belonging to the same state or profession being one of the fundamental bases of the French constitution, it is forbidden to re-establish them on any pretext or under any form whatsoever.' The workmen were forbidden to 'name presidents, keep registers, make resolutions, deliberate or draw up regulations on their pretended common interests' or to agree on any fixed scale of wages.<sup>2</sup>

Complete liberty was given to the press, except that of criticizing the government; thus no check was to be put on obscene and demoralizing literature.

Perhaps the most absurd clause of all was the one that said: 'The representatives of the people shall pronounce all together in the name of the French people the oath TO LIVE FREE OR DIE'; whether a deputy, finding his liberty curtailed, was to commit suicide is not stated. On this sort of meaningless rhetoric the Constitution was largely based.

Camille Desmoulins admirably summed up the futility of the whole thing in his speech at the Jacobin Club on October 21, 1791, when he said: 'What? You have abolished the privileges of the noblesse, of the clergy, and of the Parlements, and yet you pretend you have made a monarchic Constitution? . . . You have seen that in their very principles they did not hide from themselves the fact that they were making an impossible Constitution, that they placed the monarchy between the popular state and the despotic state, like the wheel of Ixion between two steep

<sup>1</sup> 'Rapport faite à la Convention Nationale . . . sur la Conjuration ourdie depuis plusieurs Années par des Factions criminelles pour absorber la Révolution française dans un changement de Dynastie. . . .' (Séance du 11 Germinal, An I.)

<sup>2</sup> Buchez et Roux, x. 196, my *French Revolution*, p. 185.

slopes, so that the least incline must precipitate it to one side or the other. . . . To tell the truth, there has been such a confusion of plans and so many people have worked at it from opposite directions that it is a veritable Tower of Babel.' <sup>1</sup>

No clearer documentary evidence of the fact that the legislators of France did not know what they wanted can be produced than this ridiculous charter. Of constitutional government as we in England understand it, they had no conception. They were not long in realizing the unworkableness of the scheme they had committed to paper. 'I have seen the late Constitution,' wrote Gouverneur Morris at the end of 1792, 'in one short year admired as a stupendous monument of human wisdom and ridiculed as an egregious production of folly and vice.' <sup>2</sup>

Such was the charter which Marie Antoinette has been blamed for characterizing as monstrous, and Louis XVI for criticizing in even milder terms.

Meanwhile the Assembly had flagrantly violated it. For the treatment to which the royal family had been subjected since October 6, 1789, was a direct violation of the principle laid down by the Constitution that no individual could be deprived of his liberty except by lawful means. Thus Clause 10 of Chapter V declared: 'No one can be put under arrest or detained except by virtue of a mandate by the officers of the police, a writ of arrest, a decree of accusation by the Legislative body . . . or of a verdict of condemnation to prison or correctional detention.' In a word, no one could be imprisoned without trial. Yet the King, without the pretence of a trial, without any accusation being brought against him, was kept a prisoner in his own palace. Again, the Constitution proclaimed the liberty of every man to come and go as he pleased without being arrested or detained, and the King had not even been allowed to go to

<sup>1</sup> *Discours sur la Situation Politique de la Nation*, given in Aulard, *Séances des Jacobins*, iii. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary and Letters*, ii. 7.

Saint-Cloud. Thus the liberty accorded to the humblest of his subjects was denied him.

After the flight to Varennes the supervision exercised over the royal family became still more rigorous; they were not even allowed to see each other except in the presence of their jailers. A whole camp of soldiers surrounded the Château, sentinels were posted on each staircase, the Queen's outer apartments were transformed into a guard-house, two National Guards being even stationed in her bedroom, where, as at Versailles, she spent all her time. The Queen was obliged to go to bed, to get up in the morning and to dress in their presence, but even La Fayette, who treated the royal family with incredible harshness, recognized the indecency of this arrangement, and the guards were ordered to take up their position outside her door, which, however, was left open. On one occasion the King closed it, but the guard opened it again, saying this was his order, which he would continue to obey and the King need not give himself the trouble to shut it. The door was even left open at night so that the guard, seated in an armchair outside, could keep his eyes on the Queen in her bed. One night when she could not sleep, and lit a night-lamp at her side so as to be able to read, this man had the insolence to enter her room, and sitting down familiarly beside her, said: 'I see that you cannot sleep. Let us talk; that will be better than reading.' The Queen, controlling her indignation, gently requested him to leave her in peace.

In spite of this vigilance the King and Queen were able to send letters to their friends which were smuggled out of the Château by faithful attendants. Besides writing regularly to Fersen the Queen was carrying on another political correspondence with a new-found counsellor.

The impression made on Barnave by the royal family, and particularly by the Queen, during the return from Varennes had been deep and lasting. The former revolutionary saw how mistaken he had been in his judgement of Louis XVI. This journey, says Beaulieu, 'taught him to



know a prince who, by the qualities of his mind, was far from resembling the one spoken of by the public. The Queen treated him with that affectionate politeness which had led to her being given the title of "Mary full of grace (*Marie pleine de grâces*)."<sup>1</sup> The two children, both charming to look at, played with him, seeming to implore his protection. . . . Barnave assured me that even if the whole family of Louis XVI had belonged to the commonest class, it would still have seemed to him extremely interesting.<sup>1</sup> And realizing the height of splendour from which it had fallen, this young man not only threw himself heart and soul into their cause but brought over several other deputies of the Assembly to the side of the King. Amongst these were the brothers Charles and Alexandre de Lameth whom, as boys of good family but poor, the Queen had taken under her protection and loaded with kindness and who had afterwards basely joined the ranks of her enemies. Then there was Adrien Duport, who had 'held in his hands all the threads of the Masonic conspiracy' aiming at world revolution—Duport, the organizer of the 'Great Fear' on July 28, 1789, the companion of the Duc d'Orléans on the terrible morning of October 6. There were also Le Chapelier, the Vicomte de Noailles, the Duc de Liancourt, and Muguet de Nantou. All these men, who had belonged to the faction known as the 'enragés,' now abandoned the cause of the Duc d'Orléans and took up their stand as the 'Constitutionnels'—defenders of the King but still more of the Constitution.

The three leaders of the movement, Alexandre de Lameth, Duport and Barnave, formed what the Queen called her 'Triumvirate,' acting inside a committee of five as her principal advisers. Their advice, however, was not at first conveyed by word of mouth—the Queen was too closely guarded to receive them at the Tuileries—nor would it have been safe for them to be seen entering the Château, for it was essential that their relations with her should be kept

<sup>1</sup> *Essais*, ii. 532, 533.

secret. Their exchange of views, therefore, took the form of a correspondence beginning early in July 1791. These letters, which were afterwards confided to Fersen and have been preserved by his family, remained unknown until published in part by M. de Heidenstam in 1913, and again in their entirety by Mlle Söderhjelm in 1934. Those from the Queen reflect great credit on her intelligence and industry, and at the same time refute the accusation brought against her of playing a double game by corresponding with these former enemies. To Fersen they still remained the enragés, and in her letters to him the Queen admits that she does not trust the 'Constitutionnels' completely; indeed, the Triumvirs themselves reproach her on this account. But she feels it advisable to temporize and appeal to their better feelings. She herself is concerned only in restoring peace and order and in ensuring the safety of the King and his family, also in giving back to him the authority assigned to him by the Constitution itself. If the Triumvirs are prepared to work towards this end she will give them her confidence. In this case she writes to them: 'Far from me all distrust; it is too painful to bear and it must never exist between characters who, though with different ideas, all aim at the same goal—happiness, order and tranquillity.' But she goes on to say: 'If I see that beneath the vain phantom of popularity and the fear of losing it, they (the Constitutionnels) wish neither to support, with all their courage, the just and legitimate rights of the monarch, nor to combat with force the few hotheads of the Assembly . . . then I shall retire and say to myself with pain: they had the means in themselves of giving calm and tranquillity to this country but they had not the will to do it; I shall grieve whilst sharing the misfortunes common to all, but I shall not reproach myself in any way, because I shall have done all that in me lay.' <sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette was perhaps more honest in her dealings with the Triumvirate and their following than they were

<sup>1</sup> A. Söderhjelm, *Marie Antoinette et Barnave* (1934), p. 68.

with her. For with the exception of Barnave, who was no doubt personally devoted to the cause of the Queen, the leopards had not entirely changed their spots and, after the outrages to which she had been subjected, they could hardly be sincere in writing: 'The Queen has misjudged the Revolution; she has all but come to grief in an event which should have been personally advantageous to her. . . .'<sup>1</sup> What advantages the Revolution could have brought the Queen is difficult to discover. But her new friends are ready to promise anything in order to win her over; 'Marie Antoinette will become Queen of France again,' they 'guarantee' a happy ending to the Revolution, they 'answer for' the conduct of the Legislative Assembly that is to take the place of the Constituent Assembly in October. 'We are determined,' they write, 'to maintain the monarchy and the King, to promote the energy of the government, because the happiness of the King and of our country depends on this.'<sup>2</sup> All these assurances, whether made in good faith or not, have a double purpose in view—to convince the Queen of the necessity for the King to sign the Constitution which is to be presented to him for his final acceptance on September 3, and to induce her to restrain the Emperor and the other Powers of Europe from intervention, an eventuality of which they are mortally afraid. Persuaded by their arguments and by her own observation of events, Marie Antoinette now considered that the King had no choice but to sign the Constitution; the danger of refusal was too great. But when it came to the point her grief was very bitter. On September 12 she wrote to Mercy: 'We are at a very critical moment; it is to-morrow that the King must write his acceptance to the Assembly. . . . The die is cast. . . . Pity me; I assure you that it requires far more courage to bear my situation than if I were in the midst of a battle. . . . My God, is it possible that, being born with character, and feeling so well the blood that flows in my veins, I should be destined to

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Marie Antoinette et Barnave*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

pass my days in such a century and with such men! But do not think on this account that I have lost my courage; not for myself but for my child I will bear up and go through with my long and painful career to the end. I can no longer see what I am writing. Adieu.’<sup>1</sup>

The tears which obscured her vision as she wrote these words were to flow freely on the morrow when the King sent his letter, drawn up by Duport du Tertre, to the Assembly saying that he accepted the Constitution and would go in person to their hall on the following day to take his oath to maintain it. This letter was bitterly condemned by the émigrés, but they little realized what it had cost him to write it and how his whole soul revolted against the necessity for departing from the frank and open course which his natural honesty had accustomed him to take. Each time the Constitution had been presented to him—on October 5, 1789, and on July 14, 1790—his sanction had been obtained under fear of death to his family, and now at the last moment before giving it his final acceptance the same consideration served to overcome his resistance.

‘Do not blame the King for his letter,’ Mme de la Marck wrote to Elzéar de Sabran, ‘you could not believe what he went through before making up his mind to it. He disputed every inch of the ground during eight hours, but the tears of the Queen, the imminent peril and that of his children decided him; they would all have been butchered if he had not written (it). What has happened to the French? They are a horde of brigands with nothing but rage in their hearts and who no longer know any virtues. They whipped a woman so much the other day, because she had been to mass with the Irish, that she died of it.’<sup>2</sup>

The King’s letter was received with rapture by the Assembly and a deputation of sixty members was sent to the Tuileries to express its satisfaction. The Queen herself

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre de Croze, *Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran* (1894), p. 285.

was obliged to be present with her children and to identify herself with the step the King had been forced to take, but she had little hope that this would lead to any improvement in the situation. 'These people,' she said afterwards, 'do not wish for any sovereigns . . . they are demolishing the monarchy stone by stone.'

The ordeal of the following day, September 14, was to be still more cruel. At twelve o'clock the King presented himself before the Assembly; the Queen with her children and Madame Elisabeth occupied a box in the hall. But although the entry of Louis XVI was greeted with loud applause, a humiliation had been prepared for him by the President, Thouret, who had given orders that the Assembly should remain seated whilst the King took the oath 'standing and bareheaded.'

This departure from all precedent was a calculated affront that cut Louis XVI to the heart, and in spite of the acclamations and military bands that accompanied his return to the Château surrounded by the whole Assembly, he entered the Queen's apartment pale and shattered. Throwing himself into an armchair he held his handkerchief to his eyes, saying in a broken voice: 'All is lost! Ah, Madame, and you were a witness of this humiliation! You came to France to see . . .' but sobs choked his utterance. Marie Antoinette threw herself on her knees before him and, putting her arms around him, pressed him to her heart.

In this matter of signing the Constitution for which, as we shall see in the following chapter, Louis XVI was so much blamed, Marie Antoinette stood by him valiantly. Better than anyone she understood the impossible position in which he was placed. In answer to Mercy's contention that he should not sign unconditionally, she had written on August 7:

'What you say on the conditions to be made is right but impracticable for us. We have neither force nor means; we can only temporize. This is the moment to accept the charter. All that we can do for our honour and for the

future is to make observations that will not be listened to. . . . You will certainly have seen the charter; it is a tissue of impracticable absurdities.' <sup>1</sup>

On August 16 she wrote again to Mercy:

'We are at the moment when the Constitution will be brought for acceptance. It is in itself so monstrous that it is impossible that it should stand for long. But can we risk refusing it in the position in which we are? No, and I will prove it.' And the Queen went on to say that the only way was for the King to stand by what he had said in his letter on leaving for Montmédy, but to declare that for the sake of bringing peace to the country he would accept the Constitution in the hope that it would give the people the happiness they expected. But, she added, 'if one takes this line, one must keep to it, above all, avoid everything that could cause distrust and go forward, so to speak, with the law in one's hand. I promise you that is the best way to disgust them with it at once.' <sup>2</sup>

This was precisely the policy of Louis XVI which has been represented as his 'duplicity.' 'He was not sincere,' we are told, in signing the Constitution, 'he did not really believe in it from the beginning.' Of course he did not believe in the Constitution as it stood, he had said so in his letter of June 20 and never went back on this expression of his opinion; of course Marie Antoinette thought it 'monstrous' and a 'tissue of impracticable absurdities,' for so it was, and so, as we have seen, even the revolutionaries came to regard it. In saying that it could not stand the Queen was perfectly right; it lasted, and then only nominally, for a year and nine months before it was scrapped.

Under the circumstances, what then was the King to do? To refuse to sign? Then he would have been murdered or at least deposed. To submit to deposition, or himself to abdicate? But this would have been to hand France over to the Duc d'Orléans, and rather than commit such a betrayal

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 270-272

of his people Louis XVI held it his duty to stick to his post at the peril of his life. To call in the aid of foreign Powers? This was the course that his staunchest supporters outside France perpetually urged him to follow. Louis XVI chose the only alternative, of signing the Constitution, and having signed it he resolved to carry it out to the letter, believing, like the Queen, that the best way to 'disgust the people with it' was 'to appear to enter into it whole-heartedly' so as to make them see that it would not work. Was this duplicity? Imagine a father and mother whose son had determined to embark on some enterprise they regarded as foolish; would not everyone advise them not to thwart him since 'young people must take their own line'? Would it be duplicity if, holding the same opinion, they were to conceal their disapproval behind smiles, secretly hoping he would soon see the folly of his ways? Louis XVI, as the father of a large and turbulent family, followed a course which in private life would be regarded as the height of wisdom; the people had been made to believe in the Constitution as a sort of magical remedy for every ill; well, let them try it! By way of entering whole-heartedly into the scheme, Louis XVI, who was not without a sense of humour, religiously carried a small printed copy of the Constitution about with him in his pocket which he insisted on taking out and consulting at every juncture.

The experiment was very nearly a triumphant success; but for events that no one could have foreseen, the Revolution might have ended at this moment. For by the autumn of 1791 not only the King but the Queen seemed to have regained all their former popularity.

After the signing of the Constitution the whole of Paris was *en fête*, popular games took place in the public squares, balloons covered with patriotic inscriptions floated in the air, people embraced each other in the streets with joy. At night the whole city was illuminated; the King, Queen and Dauphin drove about until eleven o'clock amidst the acclamations of the crowds. At a fête given on September 18,

'the affection of the people for Louis XVI went as far as idolatry'; the strains of the 'Ça ira' gave way to royalist songs. On the 25th popular rejoicings were held at the invitation of the King in the garden of the Tuileries. In the provinces the same spirit prevailed; an Englishman, James Frampton, writing from Dijon on October 2, observed: 'You cannot conceive how ridiculous it is to hear the amazing popularity of the King at present.'

At the Opera Comique in Paris the opera *Richard Cœur de Lion* was played and the singer, Clairval, changed the words of his song for the occasion into:

O Louis, ô mon roi !  
Tes amis t'environnent,  
Notre amour t'environne.

The King, Queen and Madame Elisabeth, released from their captivity, now showed themselves in public at the Opera, the Comédie Française, the Théâtre Italien amidst tremendous applause. 'Mon Dieu!' wrote Madame Elisabeth, 'what pleasures! I am ravished!'

Louis XVI, illusioned by this really spontaneous outburst of popularity, believed that peace had been finally restored. 'The end of the Revolution has arrived,' he wrote, 'let the people resume their happy character!'

But he reckoned without the forces that were bent on his destruction and the ruin of all France.



## CHAPTER X

### L'APPEL A L'ÉTRANGER

WHILST these events had been taking place in France the greatest agitation prevailed beyond the Eastern frontier, particularly at Coblenz, where the émigrés had collected round the Princes, who held their court at the Château of Schönbornslust near that city and formed a sort of provisional government of their own.

The failure of Louis XVI to reach Montmédy and the success of the Comte de Provence in making good his escape to Brussels had greatly strengthened the position of the Princes. 'Monsieur,' as he was called, who had no sentimental objection to being parted from his wife, had travelled separately with his friend, the Comte d'Avaray, as his sole companion, and he was praised for his good sense in choosing an unostentatious carriage for his flight instead of a large berline like the one ordered for the royal family. Yet it was not any superior wisdom which saved him. Untroubled by a conscience like that of Louis XVI, which deterred him from crossing the frontier even to reach Montmédy, the Comte de Provence had definitely resolved to seek refuge abroad and chose the safest route through Flanders which the King had refused to take. Then, apart from the fact that small and inconspicuous carriages were all the two fugitives required, the Comte and Comtesse de Provence ran little risk of being stopped however they had travelled, since they were not the object of the revolutionaries' fury; indeed the extreme facility with which Monsieur was allowed to leave France gave rise at the time to the suspicion that he had an understanding with the revolutionary leaders, and it was even suggested that he had let them know secretly

of his brother's departure and which direction he was taking.<sup>1</sup>

Whether this was so or not Monsieur now became the acknowledged leader of an emigration more concerned with saving the monarchy than the person of the King. The abject situation into which the concessions of Louis XVI had led him opened a fresh field to Monsieur's ambitions. To show himself capable of resolution where his brother had shown weakness, the defender of a throne from which its present occupant was liable to be dragged at any moment, was an incentive capable of rousing even the plethoric Comte de Provence to action, apart from the stimulus provided by the Comte d'Artois who, as Fersen says, 'talked all the time, never listened, was sure of everything, spoke only of force and never of negotiations.' 'Monsieur,' adds Fersen, 'would do better by himself, but he is entirely subjugated by the other.' The programme of the Princes was thus: no more concessions, no parleyings with the Assembly, no compromise, only armed intervention with the aid of foreign Powers.

Marie Antoinette, however, distrusted the émigrés hardly less than she feared the revolutionaries. Placed between two counsels—those of the Princes and those of the Triumvirate—she preferred the latter. The Baron de Staël reports a conversation in which she kept on repeating that 'the Princes wished to play the part of heroes at the expense of France, of the King's safety and her own, that she had always detested their intentions, that she had only conceived the plan of Montmédy in order to owe everything to the opinion formed in France in favour of the monarchy and *not to outside help*.' <sup>2</sup> Mme Campan relates that she often said: 'If the émigrés succeed they will dictate laws for a long time; it will be impossible to refuse them anything. It would certainly be too great an obligation to owe the crown to them.' Again: 'In the Princes we should have

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Bouillé, *Souvenirs et Fragments* (1906), i. 286.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance Diplomatique du Baron de Staël-Holstein* (1881), p. 226.

so many masters the more and who would be the most irksome and the most imperious.'

The same fears are expressed in her private correspondence and in her most secret letters to Fersen, where her one injunction is to 'restrain the émigrés,' and prevent them by their provocative action from adding to the dangers of the royal family. As a result the most hostile language was held against her and Louis XVI at Schönbornslust.<sup>1</sup> Madame Elisabeth's friend, the Marquise de Bombelles, writing to the Marquise de Raigecourt just before the flight to Varennes, goes so far as to speak of the impossibility for the Queen 'to give herself up to Princes who have not concealed their inveterate hatred for her.'<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the Powers of Europe were making their plans. The news of the King's arrest at Varennes had caused general indignation amongst his fellow-sovereigns but did not reach Leopold II, who was then in Italy, until July 5. On the following day he sent out a Manifesto to the leading Powers—England, Spain, Russia and Prussia—also to Naples and Sardinia, proposing a coalition in order 'to make energetic protests to the National Assembly, to support this with armed force and with means that might assure the King and his family their safety and liberty.'

At the same time Gustavus III of Sweden, the most ardent champion of the French royal family amongst the sovereigns of Europe, started a campaign of his own. On June 30 he had sent a letter through Fersen to Louis XVI expressing his sympathy and assuring him that the Kings would come to his rescue. On July 9 he wrote to Catherine II of Russia, and on the 16th to Charles IV of Spain, asking their help and proposing to form a league of which he should be the head. A letter to the same effect was sent to George III of England. Catherine the Great, preoccupied

<sup>1</sup> Rocheterie, ii. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondance du Marquis et de la Marquise de Raigecourt avec le Marquis et la Marquise de Bombelles* (1892), p. 131.

by her war with the Turks, at first showed little interest. Charles IV replied sympathetically, but pointed out the danger to Louis XVI of intervention by force. George III wrote cordially but declared his determination to maintain strict neutrality. The attitude of Prussia was non-committal. Whether the Kings were still 'slumbering on their thrones,' oblivious to the menace that the French Revolution presented to the cause of monarchy in general and concerned only with their own private interests, or whether they feared to endanger the life of Louis XVI by intervention, the fact remains that all the zeal for his rescue was concentrated in Gustavus III. Unhappily his heart was sounder than his head. A Freemason, with a craze for all sorts of Masonic orders and occult rites, he had entered into these associations, oblivious to the subtle political intrigues carried on behind the veil of mystery. But the French Revolution, that great climax to which the real initiates of the secret societies looked forward as to the dawn of the millennium, shattered his illusions, and his one desire was now to arrest the work of demolition. Execrated by his fellow-adepts he threw himself into the crusade for the defence of the French monarchy with all the fervour he had shown in the pursuit of occultism, and by his excess of zeal injured the very cause he had at heart.<sup>1</sup>

Between the policy of masterly inactivity adopted by the Powers in general and the warlike measures advocated by Gustavus III and the émigrés, Marie Antoinette steered a middle course. She wanted the Powers to interest themselves in the situation of the royal family of France and to intervene on their behalf, but this intervention was to take the form of moral pressure brought to bear on the Assembly. It is true that before the flight to Varennes she had asked the Emperor for troops to stand by on the other side of the frontier, not for the purpose of putting down the Revolution but merely to come to the rescue of the royal family if an attempt was made to recapture them at Montmédy.

<sup>1</sup> Geffroy, *Gustave III*, ii. 275.

On no other pretext, as she expressly stated, were foreign troops to enter France.<sup>1</sup>

Once back in Paris the situation was changed. It was no longer a case of holding troops in readiness to act as a defence to the liberty and even the lives of the royal family; military measures for their protection would have to be extended to the capital in the form of an invasion of France by foreign armies such as the émigrés desired—an idea to which both she and Louis XVI were entirely opposed. Moreover, encouraged by the support she found at this moment in the Constitutionnels, she had not lost all hope of coming to terms with the Assembly and finding a peaceful way out of the crisis.

At the same time there was no certainty that the Triumvirate would be able to carry out their promises. On September 14, when the King signed the Constitution, the royal family were still prisoners at the Tuileries, more closely guarded than ever, and the Queen could see no end to this intolerable situation. It was thus that she devised an alternative plan—a plan to fall back on if the Constitutionnels failed to restore the liberty and authority of the King or even to defend the lives of the royal family if again attacked. This plan is set forth in a confidential Memoir she sent to Fersen under the date of July 8. The most important passages are as follows:

‘The King thinks that the close imprisonment in which he is held and the complete state of degradation to which the Assembly has reduced the monarchy in not allowing him to exercise any action whatever, is too well known to the foreign Powers for it to be necessary to explain it here.

‘The King thinks that it is only by means of negotiation that their help can be of use to him and his kingdom; that the demonstration of force should only be secondary and in the event of their refusing here to enter into any negotiations.

‘The King thinks that open force, even after a first declaration, would be an incalculable danger, not only for

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 231, letter to Mercy of April 14, 1791.

himself and his family but even for all the French who in the interior of the kingdom are not in favour of the Revolution (*ne pensent pas dans le sens de la révolution*). . . .

'He desires that the captivity of the King should be plainly declared and recognized by foreign Powers; he desires that the good-will of his relations, friends, allies and other sovereigns who may wish to take part in it, should be manifested by a sort of congress at which the method of negotiation should be employed; it must be understood that there should be an imposing force to support it, but always in the background so as not to provoke crimes and massacres.'<sup>1</sup>

This idea of an 'armed congress' to which the Queen refers perpetually in her letters to Fersen was to be organized in the following way. The Powers were to recall their ambassadors or other representatives from Paris and assemble them at Aix-la-Chapelle, where they would deliberate on the menace to the stability of Europe and the manner in which their own interests were affected, by the change of régime in France<sup>2</sup>; then whilst carefully refraining from any interference in the government of that country and even from referring to the Constitution, the Powers were to demand that the King should be set at liberty, free to go where he pleased; only in the event of a refusal were they to threaten stronger measures. For this purpose troops were to be assembled, in order to give force to the demand of the Powers, to intimidate the rebels and encourage the loyal subjects of the King. Meanwhile Louis XVI would adhere strictly to the Constitution, but once restored to liberty he would call off intervention by the Powers and, without any idea of re-establishing the old régime, would co-operate freely with the nation in forming a workable Constitution.

In all this Marie Antoinette counts on the force of opinion expressed by the Powers and relegates military measures to the background. Thus the time-honoured accusation

<sup>1</sup> Klnckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 315.

brought against her of making an '*appel à l'étranger*' in the sense of an appeal for the invasion of France by foreign armies in order to put down the Revolution is entirely false; the initiative for such a project came from the émigrés and their allies amongst the Powers of Europe and was resisted by the Queen. It was only at the instance of Fersen that she ended by agreeing that the Congress must be armed so as to give weight to its opinion. As M. Louis Madelin has admirably expressed it: 'She dreamt in no way of a counter-revolution brought to Paris in the baggage-wagons of the foreigner, but of a simple manifestation on the frontiers, by means of which the Courts (of Europe) would show that they "disapproved of the way the King was treated."' <sup>1</sup> Should this gesture fail in its effect, 'the Emperor would mass his troops and make a feint of advancing,' which would certainly terrify the revolutionaries; then Louis XVI would come forward as mediator between the Powers and his people, who, freed from the tyranny of the demagogues, would hail him as their saviour.

M. Madelin describes this plan of the Queen's as 'a woman's idea, perfectly childish.' But M. Madelin wrote before it had been sanctified by the leading statesmen of Europe in 1919. For in reality it was almost exactly that of the founders of the League of Nations, who firmly believed that not only wars, but such an evil as slavery, could be prevented by a Conference of Powers, who would show an erring nation that 'they disapproved' of the way it treated another nation or its own subject races. In over-estimating the power of international opinion to intimidate a government bent on violence, Marie Antoinette was thus not so far behind the masculine brains of our own day in intelligence, and if she allowed herself to be convinced by Fersen's reasoning that an unarmed Congress would 'have neither the force nor the consideration it ought to have,' she merely accepted the principle ingeniously described as 'military sanctions,' which even the peace-loving minds of Geneva

<sup>1</sup> *La Révolution*, p. 157.

held to be necessary in order to enforce the decisions of the League. That such sanctions might go no further than 'making a feint of advancing' was their hope, as it was Marie Antoinette's. Nothing was further from her thoughts or desires than to plunge France into civil or international war.

In reading her correspondence with Leopold II, with Mercy and with Fersen, it is essential to bear this point in mind. Again and again she speaks of the necessity for seeking the aid of the Powers, but it is always in the sense of the Congress on which her mind is set.

Indeed, on July 30, she allowed herself to be persuaded by the Triumvirate to write a letter to Leopold II saying that now the 'Constitutionnels' had declared themselves in favour of the monarchy the situation was much more hopeful and pointing out the dangers of outside intervention. Although in a secret letter to Mercy she explains that the one to the Emperor was not the real expression of her opinion since she was 'obliged to write whatever the Triumvirate expected of her,' it had the definite effect of discouraging Leopold from further efforts. Moreover, in the same secret letter she expresses her belief in the good intentions of the Triumvirate: 'To do them justice, although they hold to their opinions, I have never seen in them anything but frankness, energy and a great desire to restore order and consequently the royal authority.'<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that, buoyed up at one moment by the assurances of the Triumvirate that all would yet be well, at another implored by Fersen not to trust the 'enragés,' she was swayed by each in turn, now leaving events to take their course, now reverting to the plan of the Congress as the only way out of the situation.

But as the time approached for the King to sign the Constitution, a storm of indignation arose beyond the frontier. Gustavus III, Mercy and the Princes declared

<sup>1</sup> Chevalier d'Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II* (French translation, 1866), p. 256.



this step would be disastrous, and although England maintained an attitude of strict neutrality towards the affairs of France, one British voice joined eloquently in the chorus of protest. After the sack of the Tuileries on August 10, 1792, a personal letter from the son of Edmund Burke was found in the famous *armoire de fer*. This letter, dated from Brussels, August 6, 1791, begins as follows:

SIR,

A very humble stranger thinks it necessary, at this most important crisis, to offer his opinion and advice. When such numbers go out of their rank to do evil, it may be allowed to me to do so with the hope of doing good. . . . As God is my judge, I would not willingly deceive you with false hopes. . . . My own opinion is of little importance; I give you that of my father. You know what he has done for you and for the mighty interests which are involved in yours. You know his wisdom also. The world fully acknowledges it, and I, who know him better than anyone, know that his wisdom is beyond even what the world thinks of it. . . . His deliberate opinion, then, is this. In the present state of things, you have nothing to hope *from the interior of your dominions*, nothing, nothing, *for a long time to come*. It can be no otherwise. It is *only* from abroad that relief can come; and *it is coming*. Therefore sustain your courage. Above all things, remember that you are surrounded by none but the most determined traitors, men who have no other view, no other desire, no other interest than to destroy you. They would not save you, much less serve you.'

Richard Burke went on to warn Louis XVI against compromises and begged him to believe that, although there were many good men amongst his subjects, none of them could lift a finger in his service 'until the real patriots, who are now driven out of France, come with foreign aid to their and your assistance. . . . You have nothing to fear from England. Depend on that. All the other Powers of Europe are for you. As far as I am able to judge, the preparations

they are making are *effectual* and cannot fail of success. . . . Maintain your courage. Whatever you have suffered or may suffer, you will live to see better days. Let it be your consolation that you suffer for your virtues, and your virtues only. . . . You are therefore the martyr of your virtues—a true martyr. Bear yourself as such. Remember that, not only your own life, but that the cause of virtue, of government, of religion, and of all good men, depends upon your firmness at this moment. God, who has inflicted these trials, will be your comfort and supporter.’<sup>1</sup>

On August 20 Edmund Burke himself wrote to Marie Antoinette saying: ‘If the King accepts the Constitution you are both lost . . . it is only firmness that can save you. . . . Your salvation lies in patience, silence and refusal.’<sup>2</sup>

The assurances of Richard Burke with regard to the Powers of Europe were perhaps not without their effect on Marie Antoinette, for on August 26 she wrote to Mercy saying: ‘It is impossible, in view of the position here, that the King should refuse his acceptance. Believe that this is true since I say it. You know my character well enough to believe that it would incline me more to what is noble and full of courage, but this would be only to incur a more than certain danger. We have therefore no other resource than that of foreign Powers. At all costs they must come to our rescue, but it is for the Emperor to place himself at the head and arrange everything. It is essential that, as a first condition, he should stipulate that the King’s brothers and all the French, but particularly the former, should keep back and not show themselves.’<sup>3</sup>

But already, on August 20, the Princes had rushed in with a Memoir addressed to the Emperor proposing a plan calculated only to irritate and not intimidate the revolutionaries. Monsieur was to be proclaimed Regent, and in a clause foreshadowing the ‘Manifesto of Brunswick’ of a year later, it was proposed that a declaration should be

<sup>1</sup> *Armour de Fer*, iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Rocheterie*, ii. 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Arneth, Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II*, p. 205.

made that the Parisians should be held responsible for any attempt on the lives of the royal family, that the direst punishment would be meted out to the seditious members of the Assembly, to municipal officers and the commanders of the National Guards, and that 'His Majesty's brothers, supported by the confederated forces of the auxiliary powers, would come at the head of the French nobility and exterminate the town guilty of these crimes.'

Louis XVI strongly resented the action of the Princes in setting up a rival government of France 'as if the throne was vacant,' and wrote to the Baron de Breteuil protesting against the assumption by the Comte de Provence of the title of Regent which, in the event of his death, should belong to Marie Antoinette.

'As long as I live,' he said, 'I shall do all that is possible to carry out my duties and restore peace and happiness to my people. If God disposes of me, the Queen my very worthy and honoured companion, will become Regent with full rights. Her good judgement, her good heart and her virtues are guarantees to me of the wisdom of her administration; her fondness for my son will redouble her natural aptitude and zeal.'<sup>1</sup>

The Princes' Memoir met with no encouragement from the Emperor, who was making his own plans for consultation with the Powers and observed that 'all such individual threats were fruitless, useless and dangerous.'<sup>2</sup> Marie Antoinette was of the same opinion. Leopold II then arranged a conference with the King of Prussia at Pillnitz in Saxony on August 25, and from there the two sovereigns, on August 27, issued a Declaration of their intention to enlist the support of the Powers of Europe in order 'to place the King of France in a position to consolidate the bases of a monarchic government, equally expedient for the rights of sovereigns and for the welfare of the French nation.'

Gustavus III went further and proposed to make a descent on the coast of France with 32,000 Swedes and

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 284.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 166.

Russians, then to work up a royalist rising and march on Paris to the rescue of the King and Queen. But even Fersen regarded such a project as hazardous.

Thus all these plans for intervention by force came from the outside, not in response to any appeal from either Louis XVI or Marie Antoinette, who remained passive, true to their policy of temporizing, in the hope that affairs might take a turn for the better.

Marie Antoinette indeed regarded even the Declaration of Pillnitz as too provocative. 'They say here,' she wrote to Mercy, 'that in the agreement signed at Pillnitz, the two Powers undertake not to allow the new French Constitution to be established. There are certainly points . . . which the Powers have the right to oppose, but in what concerns the internal laws of a country, everyone is at liberty to adopt what suits him in his own (country). They would therefore be wrong to exact this.'<sup>1</sup>

The Declaration of Pillnitz was thus not at all in accord with the views of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette as set forth in the confidential Memoir to Fersen of July 8, already quoted. In their opinion there was nothing for it but to accept the Constitution. It was thus that on September 26 the Queen wrote to Fersen: 'Here we are in a new position since the acceptance of the King; to refuse it would have been more noble, but that was impossible in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. . . . I think the best way to disgust them with it all is to appear to enter into it wholeheartedly; that will soon make them see that nothing will work.'<sup>2</sup> Fersen perfectly understood this, for in his reply, after nearly four lines of erasures—a rare occurrence in his letters—he goes on to say: 'I pity you for being forced to sanction; but I feel your position, it is dreadful, and there was no other line to take.' Then after describing the projects of the Powers he ends his letter by asking:

'Firstly. Do you mean to enter sincerely into the

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II*, 209.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 192.

revolution and do you think there is no other way?

Secondly. Do you wish for help or do you wish all negotiations with the Courts (of Europe) to cease?

Thirdly. Have you a plan and what is it?

Forgive all these questions; I flatter myself that you will see in them only the desire to serve you and a proof of attachment and boundless devotion' (*une preuve d'attachement et de dévouement sans bornes*—in French a purely formal expression).<sup>1</sup>

The answer to these three questions is not to be found in Marie Antoinette's correspondence with Fersen, and the best explanation of the King and Queen's real policy at this juncture is given in the letter from Louis XVI to his brothers. The two Princes had written from Coblenz on September 10 under the inspiration of Calonne, imploring him not to sign the Constitution and urging him to count on the help of foreign Powers. The non-complicity of Louis XVI with what is known as *l'appel à l'étranger* is shown by the arguments they use in order to overcome his reluctance to accept this help when offered:

'Those who know that your resolution can only be shaken by appealing to your feelings, would no doubt make you regard the aid of foreign Powers as disastrous to your subjects . . . and will depict to you the kingdom drenched in blood, rent to pieces, threatened with dismemberment. . . .

'But, Sire, the intentions of the sovereigns who will give you help, are as upright and as pure as the zeal which made us solicit them; there is nothing alarming in them either for the State or for your people: it is not in order to attack them, it is to render them signal service to tear them from the despotism of the demagogues, from the calamities of anarchy,' etc.

They go on to ask: 'How can you, Sire, give a sincere and valid approbation to the supposed Constitution which has produced so many evils?'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, iii. 15-32.

This letter reached Louis XVI whilst he was in the middle of one explaining his conduct to his brothers at great length, of which the most important passages are as follows:

'You have no doubt been informed that I have accepted the Constitution, and you know the reasons that I gave to the Assembly, but these must not suffice for you; I wish to make known to you all my motives. The state of France is such that she is on the verge of complete dissolution, which will only be hastened if one wishes to bring violent remedies to bear on the ills that overwhelm her. The party spirit that divides her and the destruction of all authority are the causes of her trouble. Divisions must be made to cease and authority re-established, but for this purpose only two means are possible—union or force. Force can only be employed by foreign armies, and this means having recourse to war. Can a King allow himself to carry war into his own States? Is not the remedy worse than the disease? . . . I have therefore concluded that this idea must be abandoned, and that I must try the only other means left me—the union of my will with the principles of the Constitution. I feel all the difficulties of governing so great a nation. I might say I feel its impossibility, but any obstacle I had placed in the way would have caused the war I was anxious to avoid, and would have prevented the people from judging of the Constitution, because they would have seen nothing but my constant opposition. By adopting their ideas and following them in all good faith they will learn the cause of their troubles; public opinion will change; and since without this change one can hope for nothing but fresh convulsions, I shall bring about a better order of things by my acceptance than by my refusal. . . . I wished to let you know the motives for my acceptance, so that your conduct should be in accord with mine. Your attachment to me and your wisdom should make you renounce dangerous ideas that I do not adopt. . . . I was just finishing this letter when I received the one you sent me. . . . You cannot believe how much this action has pained me. I

was already much grieved at the Comte d'Artois going to the Conference of Pillnitz without my consent, but I will not reproach you, my heart cannot bring itself to do so. I will only point out to you that in acting independently of me he thwarts my plans as I disconcert his. . . . I have already told you that the people endured all their privations because they have always been assured that these would end with the Constitution. It is only two days since it was finished, and you expect their minds to be changed already. I have the courage to accept it, so as to give the nation time to experience that happiness with which it has been deluded, and you wish me to renounce this useful experience! Sedition-mongers have always prevented it from judging of their work by talking to it incessantly of the obstacles I placed in the way of its execution; instead of taking from them this last resource, would you serve their fury by having me accused of carrying war into my kingdom? You flatter yourselves to outwit them by declaring that you are marching in spite of me, but how can one persuade them of this when the declaration of the Emperor and the King of Prussia was occasioned at your request? Will it ever be believed that my brothers do not carry out my orders? Thus you will show me to the nation as accepting [the Constitution] with the one hand and soliciting foreign Powers with the other. What upright man could respect such conduct, and do you think to help me by depriving me of the esteem of all right-thinking people?'<sup>1</sup>

This letter had little effect in pacifying the Princes, whilst the King's acceptance of the Constitution roused the contempt and indignation of Gustavus III and Catherine II. But it came as a relief to Leopold II and Frederick William II of Prussia, never too zealous in the cause of the French monarchy, who were now able to relinquish the idea of intervention. On September 19 Leopold sent out a circular letter to the Powers suspending operations but saying that in the event of renewed outrages against the King the

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Retrospective*, 2<sup>ème</sup> Série, vol. ii. pp. 50-57; d'Allonville, ii. 273.

Powers must be ready to act in concert to defend his rights.

The astounding wave of popularity on which the royal family were borne after the signing of the Constitution seemed at first to justify the policy of Louis XVI in acceding to the people's wishes and to show that the Princes and Powers had been wrong in their predictions of disaster. Moreover the King was not alone in imagining that the Revolution had ended; from August 1 to October 1, 1791, says M. Louis Madelin, this was the general opinion. The people indeed were heartily sick of agitation and longed for a return to peace and order. When the famous *armoire de fer* (iron cupboard) at the Tuileries, which contained the King's secret papers, was broken open later, several copies of a petition were found, signed by working-men of Paris, imploring the King to use all the force at his disposal to put down sedition and restore peace and order. Thus the petitioners said:

'Sire, we endured without murmuring all the scourges which great changes bring in their train; our patience equalled our hopes because they talked to us of happiness, liberty and equality, . . . but for what a short time this illusion lasted. . . .

'We take the liberty of exposing to your Majesty, whose goodness and sensibility we know, the picture of our frightful position, the total disappearance of money, the ever-increasing price of the most necessary articles of food, the decrease in private fortunes without increasing that of the State, the proscription of luxury, the absence of the great whose pleasures and caprices sustain commerce and those arts of which we make the rough drafts. . . .

'Is this the fruit of so many sacrifices, the fulfilment of such fine promises? What have the representatives of the people done for their happiness? Who are those whose condition has been improved? Liberty and equality are chimeras that have broken all the ties of society, confused all powers, destroyed order, sown discord, brought in



anarchy and produced all the ills of which we, our wives and our children are the first victims. . . .

'Feeling hearts are left us, we offer them to your Majesty as to the best and fondest of fathers: we have arms (*bras*), they are at your orders, as the supreme chief of the empire; we implore you to use all the forces of which the nation has made you the depositary to remedy abuses, to restore the balance between the price of food and our daily wages, and above all to disperse and punish these sedition-mongers who under the title of *Amis de la Constitution* (Friends of the Constitution) are its most cruel enemies. . . .

'Deign, Sire, to take into consideration the address of your faithful subjects, the workmen of the town of Paris, and to accept the homage of the feelings of love and respect with which they will be filled to their last breath for your sacred person and your august family.'<sup>1</sup>

It will be said, of course, that this appeal was 'inspired'; that may be so, but it bore hundreds of signatures; tailors, masons, carpenters, painters, sculptors, workers of all kinds, were not afraid to put their names to it. Moreover, as we know from other records of the time, discontent at this moment was very real and the grievances it enumerated were indeed those from which the people were suffering. For the rich having been driven from the country in peril of their lives, vast unemployment had been created and the luxury workers collected in crowds at the street corners 'to deliberate on the misery of their condition,' crying out: 'Give us back our noblesse who provided us with a living, our clergy and our Courts!'

Under these circumstances the King might well conclude the Revolution had ended. Shut off at the Tuileries from the world of Paris, oblivious to the intrigues going on behind the scenes, without clear-sighted Ministers to guide him, he could only judge the situation by his own observation of events and the conclusions to which his simple but logical mind led him. Thus he may well have reasoned that peace

<sup>1</sup> *Armoire de Fer*, i. 239 and following.

must now be restored since there was nothing left to disturb it, all ancient abuses had been swept away, all the people's just demands had been granted, the Constitution for which they clamoured had been duly signed, sealed and delivered, the fear of foreign invasion had been removed; what was there to 'revolute' about?

Two circumstances, however, combined at this juncture to upset all his calculations. The first of these was a revival of the Orléaniste conspiracy.

By way of reconciliation and of putting an end to the ill-feeling entertained for him by his cousin, Louis XVI, on September 16, had made the Duc d'Orléans an admiral of the fleet, a distinction to which he had long aspired. Not content with expressing his appreciation by letter the Duc went to see Bertrand de Molleville, who had been made Minister for the Navy in October, and told him how deeply he had been grieved at the accusations brought against him and, of course, protesting his innocence. He went on to ask Bertrand to find out whether the King would receive him if he went next day to pay his court to him at the Tuileries.

The King consented to receive him, and after half an hour's conversation talked the matter over with Bertrand, to whom he said: 'I think, like you, he has come back (to me) in all good faith and that he will do all he can to repair the evil he has done and in which it is possible that he has not taken as great a part as we believed.'

Unfortunately the Court was not informed of this reconciliation, and when the Duc came on the following Sunday to attend the King's levée, he was received in the most offensive way by the crowd of royalists who had assembled for the ceremony and who rudely jostled him as he tried to enter the King's apartment. The Duc d'Orléans then went down to the Queen's room where the morning meal had been spread, but voices cried: 'Messieurs, take care of the dishes!' . . . as if to guard against poison being slipped into them by the Duc. Such was the suspicion shown him—

which in the past he had thoroughly deserved, but was now most inopportune—that he left without seeing the royal family, pursued down the staircase with insulting murmurs; someone even spat on his head from above. Convinced that the King and Queen were responsible for these outrages, which in reality they deplored, the Duc went out of the Château, his face convulsed with fury, swearing implacable hatred against them—an oath which he was to carry out to the point of regicide.<sup>1</sup> From this moment the Orléanistes became more active than ever.

The second circumstance which gave a fresh impetus to the Revolution was to have still greater consequences.

On September 30 the National Assembly, which had become known as the Constituent Assembly, having finished its work with the signing of the Constitution, came to an end and Louis XVI was present at its closing séance. But although he was hailed with acclamations as he left the hall the revolutionary spirit was seen to be still alive, for his most violent enemies, known from this day as ‘the virtuous Pétion’ and ‘the incorruptible Robespierre,’ were crowned with oak leaves by the populace who, unharnessing the horses of their carriage, dragged the two deputies in triumph through the streets.

All might yet have been well but for the composition of the succeeding Assembly. For the Legislative Assembly now took the place of the Constituent and, at the instigation of Robespierre, no deputies who had sat in the latter could be re-elected. The Legislative Assembly thus consisted entirely of new members, not only without any political experience but imbued with revolutionary ideas. For the first Assembly had included a certain number of enlightened and loyal men; these were all excluded and the ‘Right’ of the new Assembly was composed of about 150 supporters of the Constitution, the ‘Left’ of the same number of Jacobins elected by the Jacobin Clubs all over the country, whilst the Centre, comprising about 400 men calling them-

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, *Mémoires*, i. 176.

selves the 'Impartials,' swayed from side to side but usually, actuated by fear, towards the Left.

Thus the fight for the Constitution having ended, an Assembly was formed out of men who, in the main, cared nothing for it. 'The Legislative Assembly,' says Prudhomme, the revolutionary journalist, 'was Jacobin or at least under the rod of the Jacobins'; its members 'had little attachment to a Constitution they had all sworn to defend'; their aims were far more revolutionary.

The King was therefore placed once more in an impossible position, for the ingenious plan of Robespierre had deprived him of the support of all the men who had been won over to him after the flight to Varennes, so that having at last come to an understanding with the Assembly, the ground was cut from under his feet and the whole work of conciliation had to be begun again.

But from the outset it was evident that no conciliation was possible; the King, having announced his intention to appear in person at the opening of the Legislative Assembly on October 1, found that fresh affronts had been prepared for him. Dominated by the Jacobins the Assembly had decided that the King should be deprived of the titles of 'Sire' or 'Majesty,' and that the President should take precedence over him in the seat of honour. Louis XVI, consulting his pocket edition of the Constitution, found that it did not oblige him to be present at the opening of the Assembly and, in order to avoid these further humiliations, announced his intention not to appear. At the same time the people, still at the height of their fervour for the King, gave way to violent indignation, insulted the members of the new Assembly, calling them ragamuffins (*va-nu-pieds*) and crying loudly: 'Vive le Roi!' Under this pressure the Assembly was forced to give way and rescind the offending decrees. The King then appeared at the opening sitting and was received with due respect.

The Assembly had made itself thoroughly unpopular by these measures. On October 7 the author of the *Corre-*

*spondance Secrète* writes: 'The new legislators are thought very little of by the people and love for the King makes progress in proportion to the efforts made by a few rebels who still wish to impair the majesty of the crown. So much fermentation is noticed in Paris and some parts of the country that it seems possible the counter-revolution might take place of itself in our midst.'

The Triumvirate of Lameth, Duport and Barnave who, a month earlier, had 'answered for' the conduct of the Legislative Assembly, now expressed their disgust at the behaviour of the rebels. On October 10 they wrote to the Queen, saying: 'The Republican party is represented in the present Assembly in such a degrading way that soon the words republicans and brigands will be synonymous even in the conversation of the people.'<sup>1</sup>

The Queen had now consented to see the members of the Triumvirate in person and an interview was arranged to take place at the Tuileries in the greatest secrecy between her and Lameth and Barnave on October 1, but the number of people they met in the courts of the Château scared the two Triumvirs away, and it was not until the 5th that they were able to renew the attempt and reach the Queen's apartment in safety. After this Barnave seems to have been admitted several times alone and to have been the only one of the party led by the Triumvirate whom Marie Antoinette trusted. Fersen, who from the beginning had no confidence in the *enragés*, as he still called these new allies of hers, begs her continually to beware of them.

'Do not let your heart give in to the *enragés*,' he writes on October 13, 'they are scoundrels who will never do anything for you; they must be distrusted but made use of.' To this Marie Antoinette replies that she does not trust them, 'one must make use of them in order to prevent greater evils; but as for doing any good I know they are incapable of it.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Marie Antoinette et Barnave*, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, pp. 196, 213.

Once again the futility of winning over revolutionaries was demonstrated. For their power was in exact proportion to their revolutionary fervour; as soon as that began to wane they were unable to exercise any lasting influence over the course of events. Already in the spring of 1791, before the flight to Varennes, the party of the Lameths and Barnave was reported by Lord Gower to be 'visibly on the decline,' and although after Varennes they had succeeded in gaining a following of so-called 'Constitutionnels' in support of the monarchy, their past records prevented them from inspiring any great degree of public confidence, whilst still at times their revolutionary sentiments reasserted themselves and their zeal for the Constitution triumphed over their loyalty to the monarch. And now that they had been excluded from the new Assembly, such influence as they could exercise in favour of the King was less than ever. Fersen was right; no good could come of maintaining relations with this party, only danger to the King and Queen. For, in spite of the secrecy with which these negotiations were carried on, the public soon got wind of them, and already in September, although Marie Antoinette had not seen Barnave since the return from Varennes, he was reported to have become her lover! <sup>1</sup>

That Barnave, like Mirabeau, had fallen beneath the spell of the Queen's charm and dignity seems, however, certain. When in January 1792, seeing that the situation was now hopeless, he took his leave of her, he said in that last interview: 'I am quite certain to pay with my head for the interest your misfortunes have inspired in me and for the services I wished to render you. I ask for all recompense to have the honour of kissing your hand.' <sup>2</sup> The Queen, with tears in her eyes, granted this favour and ever after retained a high opinion of Barnave, who, as he had foreseen, paid the penalty of his devotion, and a fortnight after her execution followed her to the guillotine.

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Campan, p. 327.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

THE inauguration of the Legislative Assembly had been followed by a change in the King's Ministry. On October 4 the Marquis de Bertrand Molleville, usually known as Bertrand de Molleville, was appointed to the Admiralty, on November 18 de Lessart succeeded Montmorin at the Foreign Office, on December 7 Mme de Staël's friend, the Comte Louis de Narbonne, of 'left wing' sympathies, was made Minister of War, and a few days later Cahier de Gerville, an ardent revolutionary, became Minister of the Interior. Duport du Tertre, who still remained Minister of Justice, and Tarbé, Comptroller General of Finances, were both more 'Constitutional' than Monarchist.

Thus the unfortunate Louis XVI was not only confronted by a new and hostile Assembly, but surrounded by Ministers mainly appointed on the advice of the Triumvirate, with little zeal for his cause. Alone Bertrand de Molleville, one of the best Ministers Louis XVI ever employed, was sincerely devoted to him and now became his principal adviser. A conversation he had with the King on his appointment, which throws a further light on the attitude of both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette towards the Constitution, is recorded in his Memoirs. Bertrand had asked Louis XVI what his real feelings were on this subject, to which the King replied :

'This is what I think. I do not regard this Constitution as a masterpiece—far from it; I think it has great defects, and if I had had the liberty to comment on it, advantageous reforms would have been made. But to-day it is too late; I have sworn to it as it is; I wish to be, and I must be,

strictly faithful to my oath, the more so because I believe that the most precise enforcement of the Constitution is the most certain way of making the nation thoroughly understand it, and perceive the changes that should be made in it. I have not, and I cannot have, any other plan than this; I shall never depart from it and I desire my Ministers to conform to it.'

Bertrand replied that he thought this very wise and asked whether the Queen was of the same opinion as the King.

'Yes, absolutely; she will tell you so herself.'

Bertrand then went down to see the Queen, who received him with extreme graciousness and said:

'The King has told you his intentions with regard to the Constitution; do you not think that the only plan he can follow is to be faithful to his oath?'

'Yes, certainly, Madame.'

'Well then, you can be sure we shall not be made to change. Come, come, M. Bertrand, let us have courage; I hope that with patience, firmness and continuity all is not yet lost.'<sup>1</sup>

The Queen that day was in one of her sanguine moods; before long she realized that there was no real ground for optimism. Even as a girl of eighteen she had expressed her fear of 'French enthusiasm,' and the experiences of the past two years had taught her how little reliance could be placed on the sudden spell of popularity the royal family were now enjoying.

'All is fairly quiet in appearance at the moment,' she wrote to Fersen a fortnight later, 'but this tranquillity hangs only by a thread and the people are still, as ever, ready to commit horrors; we are told they are for us, I believe nothing of this, at least as far as I am concerned. I know the worth of it all.'<sup>2</sup>

Even as she wrote these words horrors of the most ghastly kind were being committed in the provinces. Under the

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, *Mémoires*, i. 101-103.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 199.



auspices of the Jacobin Clubs all over the country, risings had been taking place everywhere since the month of June, accompanied by pillage, burnings and murders. At Toulon the moderates were shot down, at Brest country gentlemen and officers were massacred in the streets, in the eight departments surrounding Paris riots continually occurred in the markets, the farms were invaded by bands of brigands, landed proprietors attacked, houses broken into, the mayor of Melun was dragged bleeding from the hands of the populace.<sup>1</sup> But the culminating horror of this autumn took place at Avignon, where a band of Jacobins, including Jourdan, surnamed Coupe-tête, carried out a reign of terror with the aid of a horde of 3000 brigands, comprising only 200 inhabitants of the town, and made up of deserters from the army, smugglers, criminals of all kinds, and above all foreign malefactors. When at last the people—hungry workmen, women enraged by the pillaging of the churches—turned on their oppressors and killed one of the leaders, the Jacobins took a terrible revenge. Sixty-one people, including priests, women and children, were thrown into the Prison of the Palace, known as the Glacière. Then Jourdan, heading a band of murderers, ordered them to set to work. For three days, from October 16, the massacre continued, the wretched victims, felled with iron bars, were thrown, some dead, some alive, into a deep ditch, one upon the other, the mother on the body of her child, the son upon his father; then those who still breathed were battered to death with stones and the whole mass of corpses was covered up with quicklime.<sup>2</sup>

The Legislative Assembly accorded an amnesty to the perpetrators of these crimes. Yet the Jacobins of the Assembly did not comprise the future Terrorists; on the contrary, they were led by the faction later to be known as the Girondins, destined to go down in history as noble martyrs of the Terror. But, as in all revolutions, it was only

<sup>1</sup> Taine, iii. 93-146.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 215; Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, iv. 23-25.

by fanning the spirit of revolt that political success could be achieved: thus each faction in turn distinguished itself at first by violence, and as its revolutionary ardour abated was superseded by another of a more intractable kind. So the Constitutionnels, who had started as the extremists of 1789, had given way to the Girondins, the Girondins were to give way to the Dantonistes, the Dantonistes to the Robespierristes, until Thermidor arrested the crescendo of revolutionary frenzy.

At this early stage of their evolution the Girondins therefore exercised no restraining influence either over the new legislators of France or over their fellow-Jacobins in the provinces.

Marie Antoinette realized that all hope of peace had now been destroyed. 'There is nothing to be done with this Assembly,' she wrote to Fersen on October 31, 'it is a collection of scoundrels, madmen and fools; the few who wish for order and to do less harm than the rest are not listened to and dare not speak. It is, moreover, down in the mud even amongst the people whom they try to work up in every way, but that does not catch on any longer.'<sup>1</sup>

In this expression of opinion Marie Antoinette went no further than the Triumvirate or the people themselves in the epithets they applied to the new rulers of France. When she said there was nothing to be done with the Legislative Assembly, she only spoke the truth. There was little to be done either with the King's new Ministers—Bertrand de Molleville always excepted. Cahier de Gerville became a particular thorn in the side of Louis XVI. With a rough man of the people the King would have felt less ill at ease, but this pretentious lawyer, swollen with vanity, completely disconcerted him. One day when Cahier de Gerville brought him an official report the King absent-mindedly made use of the old and accustomed formula: 'I permit you to present me with your work.' Whereat de Gerville,

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 209.

taking up his portfolio, abruptly left the King and went off to vent his spleen on the other Ministers, telling them what had happened and repeating angrily: 'I permit you! I permit you! I permit you to do me a great service! A nice way of thanking!' <sup>1</sup> His colleagues succeeded in calming him, and after a while his revolutionary fervour became tempered by a sincere respect for the character of Louis XVI.

At a meeting of the King's Council early in 1792 Bertrand de Molleville relates that Cahier de Gerville read aloud a proclamation he had drawn up in the King's name with regard to the pillage and assassinations which were being carried out against those of the nobles who had remained on their lands, in the course of which proclamation this phrase occurred:

'These disorders very much embitter the happiness we enjoy.'

'Alter that phrase,' the King said to the Minister, 'do not make me speak of my happiness, sir; I cannot lie to that extent. How can you expect that I should be happy, M. de Gerville, when no one is happy in France? No, sir, the French are not happy; I see it only too well. They will be one day, I hope; I desire it ardently, then I shall be too and I shall be able to speak of my happiness.'

These words, uttered with deep emotion, made such an impression on the Ministers that for some minutes business was held up, and after leaving the Council meeting for the small committee-room where they usually met for discussion, they could talk of nothing but the King's goodness.<sup>2</sup>

Louis XVI seems now to have completely recovered from his breakdown, for Bertrand relates that the Ministers were all astonished at the ability shown by the monarch who had been presented to them as of very limited intelligence, and at 'the facility and energy' with which he spoke whenever 'it was a question of religion, the alleviation of the people's lot, or the happiness of the French.' 'I do not pretend that Louis XVI was a genius,' Bertrand de Molleville goes on

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, *Mémoires*, I. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 219.

to say, but 'what is certain is that we saw him every day do with the greatest ease a thing that has always been regarded as a *tour de force* by the cleverest people . . . that is, to read a letter, a newspaper or a memoir, whilst at the same time listening to a report and to take in both perfectly.' 'None of us,' Bertrand de Molleville says again, 'could compete with the King for memory; I have never known such an accurate one; his judgement was not less so, not only in the matter of business but in drawing up proclamations, letters or speeches addressed to the Assembly.'<sup>1</sup> The trouble with Louis XVI was still his want of self-confidence; though 'endowed,' as Bertrand observes, 'with the soundest judgement,' he could not trust it but habitually deferred to the opinions of his Council, often less well advised than himself.

At this moment, however, Louis XVI seems to have displayed something of the energy he had shown at the beginning of his reign, for in November he refused to sanction two most unjust decrees, one confiscating the goods of all the émigrés who had not returned to France by the end of the year, the other imposing severe penalties on the non-juring priests (i.e., those who had not taken the oath on the civil constitution of the clergy) and even driving them from their parishes. At the same time, in order to allay the fears created by the militant attitude of the émigrés, he wrote to his brothers begging them to return to France, a request with which they refused to comply.

The rift between the Queen and the Princes had now begun to create divisions even at the Tuileries, for whilst Marie Antoinette deplored their provocative conduct which could only endanger the royal family in Paris, Madame Elisabeth, stoutly counter-revolutionary as ever, continued to take their part.

'My sister [Madame Elisabeth], the Queen wrote to Fersen on October 31, 'is so indiscreet, surrounded by intriguers and above all dominated by her brothers from

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, *Mémoires*, i. 221.

the outside, that we cannot talk or we should quarrel all day.' <sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette herself had returned more resolutely than ever to her idea of a Congress of the Powers and at the same time to the one that had inspired the flight to Montmédy, which was now recognized in certain quarters as very sound. The Baron de Staël, writing on August 28, observed that many people regretted that the 'plan of Montmédy' had not succeeded, since it promised France 'a Constitution equally removed from the two extremes' of aristocracy and democracy. If then the royal family could now find refuge near the frontier the King would be able to speak his mind freely, but this time with the Powers of Europe assembled in Congress at his back.

At first another attempt at flight seems to have been contemplated—on October 19—but this project was abandoned ten days later in favour of the plan of waiting on in the hope that the King would be allowed to go openly to the frontier and confer with the Powers. Thus on October 31 Marie Antoinette writes to Fersen:

'It seems to me that it is only by seeking to gain every day more popularity and confidence that, once the Congress is established, we shall be able to join it or at least go to the frontiers so as to be in some way ourselves entrusted with the interests of this country. If ever we gain this point that is all and it must be our only aim, but for that purpose all our daily actions must combine to inspire confidence. The trouble is that we are seconded here by no one besides ourselves, and whatever efforts I may make I cannot alone do all I should like and that I feel is so necessary for the public good. Spain had another idea which I think detestable, which is to let the Princes enter [France] with all the French (i.e., the émigrés) supported only by the King of Sweden as our ally and declare by a Manifesto that they have not come to make war, but to rally every good Frenchman to their side, and declare themselves the protectors of

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 207.

true French liberty. The great Powers would provide the money necessary for this operation and would themselves remain outside with a sufficient number of troops to appear imposing, but to do nothing, so that a pretext could not be made of invasion and fear of dismemberment. But all that is not practicable, and I think if the Emperor hastens to announce the Congress it is the only useful and fitting way to end all this.' <sup>1</sup>

Thus Marie Antoinette considered that any display of military force, except as a support to a Congress of the Powers, would be 'detestable,' and even then she seems to have regarded it as only of secondary importance, for Fersen still had constantly to remind her of the necessity that the Congress should be armed. On October 29 he writes to her:

'You must insist that the Emperor should make a demonstration of armed force to support the Congress, or at least make preparations for the march of troops; otherwise it will have neither the force nor the consideration it ought to have.' <sup>2</sup> And to the Baron de Taube he writes on October 30: 'I have made the Queen feel the necessity that the Congress should be armed and that preparations should be made everywhere.' <sup>3</sup>

Gustavus III took a still stronger line, treating the idea of a Congress as futile and declaring that 'only arms can decide this great quarrel.' <sup>4</sup> Oblivious to the danger that invading armies would bring to the lives of the royal family, he was resolved at all costs to re-establish the French monarchy on its former basis, which he regarded as even of more importance than the safety of the King. Sincerely concerned at the situation in which Louis XVI was placed, he nevertheless differed from him widely in his political views. For whilst Louis XVI desired only a return to the principles he had set forth at the Séance Royale of June 23, 1789, and those of the reforms he considered reasonable which had been introduced by the nobles when abandoning their privileges on

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 209, 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 224.

August 4 of the same year, Gustavus III wished to obliterate everything that had been done since the beginning of the Revolution and restore the old régime in its entirety. Once at liberty, he wrote to Fersen, the King 'must make up his mind to recognize nothing that has happened in France since the opening of the States General in 1789, and must regard himself as invested with all the authority and rights which were transmitted to him with the crown of Louis XV.'<sup>1</sup>

Because neither Louis XVI nor Marie Antoinette desired this return to the evil system of the past, still less that it should be re-established by force of arms, Gustavus III regarded them as weaklings, and on November 11 wrote indignantly to Fersen about their pusillanimity in discouraging foreign intervention. After referring to the 'tergiversations' of the Emperor he observed, 'but it is true that the shameful behaviour of the King of France has marvellously favoured his projects, and although we might have expected weak measures, the conduct of the Court of France has surely surpassed in cowardice and ignominy all that could have been presumed.'<sup>2</sup> Gustavus III went on to denounce Louis XVI for putting obstacles in the way of the efforts of the Princes and Powers to come to his rescue, and Marie Antoinette for preferring the subjection and the dangers in which she was living to the help of her brothers. 'I must tell you that the Empress (of Russia) is very much displeased at this conduct and above all at the Queen of France writing letter upon letter to the Emperor (of Austria) in order to prevent him acting.' The King of Sweden begs Fersen to use his influence with the Queen and to show her that not only is she providing the Emperor with pretexts for inaction but also incurring the hatred of all those who have compromised themselves for her cause. 'The Queen will not gain her end by such conduct and she will only arouse the displeasure of her true friends,' etc.<sup>3</sup>

Fersen replies to this tirade by saying that the King of

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 290.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 223.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 223.

Sweden has been misinformed, 'it is not the intention of the King and Queen (of France) to remain inactive'; on the contrary, the Queen has once more urged the Emperor to call a Congress, on which she insists as the only thing to do.<sup>1</sup> This was of course not calculated to satisfy Gustavus III, who had already expressed his opinion that a Congress would be futile and that intervention must be carried out by force of arms.

Whilst defending Marie Antoinette from the charge of inaction in his letter to Gustavus III, Fersen himself felt some uneasiness on that score, and indeed the day before had written her a Memoir of enormous length in which he attempted to rouse and alarm her.<sup>2</sup> He urged her not to depend on the Emperor who was not to be relied on to do anything for her, he told her that the letters she had written to him (the Emperor) had given the impression that she did not wish him to take action, but preferred to abide by the Constitution and stand in with the Triumvirate rather than owe anything to the Princes and émigrés—which was indeed the fact—and that this was alienating the noblesse, who were led to believe that the steps she had taken were acts of weakness. 'If you cannot get quickly out of the state you are now in, you will be abandoned by all parties and delivered over entirely to the mercy of the rebels and Republicans, who will find no further obstacle to their guilty projects. . . . You must absolutely act for yourself or give up doing anything and decide to remain as you are. . . . Make up your mind, it is necessary for your glory and your reputation.'<sup>3</sup>

In the same Memoir Fersen urged that in view of the Emperor's lack of zeal in his sister's cause, Marie Antoinette should approach the other Powers—Spain, Prussia, Sweden and Russia—telling them she had asked her brother to convene an armed Congress and pressing for their co-operation.

At this point, however, the Emperor refused point-blank

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 261.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 258.



to support the scheme, saying, like Gustavus III, that a Congress would be useless. The fact was that the Powers could not be sure what line Louis XVI would take. His acceptance of the Constitution and his letter to his brothers on that occasion had led them to believe that he had no desire for intervention and that he intended to come to terms with the Revolution by a policy of conciliation. Up to a point they were right. Nothing would have pleased Louis XVI better than to be able to make peace at home without help from abroad, but the attitude of the Legislative Assembly and the growing disorders of France had shown him that the hopes he had entertained of a peaceful settlement of the situation were vain and that an appeal to the Powers had now become necessary. The Emperor, however, could not know this, for owing to the way in which their correspondence was watched Marie Antoinette in writing to her brother was obliged to dissemble her real feelings. Only in her cipher letters to Fersen conveyed by absolutely safe and secret methods could she speak her mind freely; hence the inability of Leopold II to discover the true facts of the situation. In a conversation with Fersen Mercy explained that since the King of France had chosen to accept the Constitution and seemed anxious to let the nation find out its defects for itself it was impossible to go against his wishes, for were a Congress now to be convened at which Louis XVI was present, and he were then to declare that he was satisfied with the state of affairs in France, the Powers would find themselves in a most awkward situation. At the same time Mercy wrote to Marie Antoinette saying that the Emperor had already been put to considerable expense by keeping troops inactive on the frontier whilst the King of France pursued his system of conciliation.

Fersen assured Mercy that the letters he had received from the Queen reiterated her desire for the Congress. But it had now become necessary that the King should speak for himself.

Louis XVI had been brought very slowly to the point of

appealing for intervention by the Powers; hitherto plans to this effect had been concerted between Marie Antoinette and Fersen, whilst the King had gone on vainly hoping that his acceptance of the Constitution and the fidelity with which he had adhered to it would rally the nation to his support. But the anarchy that had broken out in the provinces, the ghastly affair of the Glacière d'Avignon, the intractability of the new deputies in the Legislative Assembly, and finally their insistence on the decrees against the émigrés and the priests that his conscience forbade him to sanction, dashed all hopes to the ground. It was thus that at last he consented to appeal for arbitration to the Powers, and on December 3 addressed a confidential letter to the King of Prussia, saying:

‘I have heard . . . of the interest your Majesty has shown not only in my person but in the good of my kingdom. Your Majesty’s inclination to give me proofs of this in every case where this interest can serve the welfare of my people has been keenly felt by me; I appeal to it with confidence at this moment, when, in spite of the acceptance I have given to the new Constitution, the sedition-mongers openly display the project of destroying what remains of the monarchy. I have just addressed myself to the Emperor, to the Empress of Russia, to the Kings of Spain and Sweden, and have put before them the idea of a Congress of the principal Powers of Europe, supported by armed force, as the best way to check the factions here, to provide the means for establishing a more desirable order of things and to prevent the evil that is tormenting us from spreading to the other States of Europe.’<sup>1</sup>

Here, again, it will be seen that Louis XVI had no intention of going back on the reforms introduced since the beginning of the Revolution or of repudiating the part of the Constitution which tended to the same end, but only of restoring

<sup>1</sup> Beaulieu, iii. 133. This letter is erroneously stated by Bertrand de Molleville and d’Allonville to have been written on December 3, 1790, but that it was 1791 is proved by the reply of the King of Prussia under date of January 14, 1792. See Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 128.

peace to France. Beaulieu commenting on this letter to the King of Prussia observes: 'In all his most confidential letters there is never any question of arbitrarily re-establishing the old monarchy, a point on which a number of the most notable émigrés had declared they would never compromise; he only speaks of "a more desirable order of things" and always of the good of his kingdom and the happiness of his people.'

Unhappily, in addressing himself to the King of Prussia, Louis XVI had turned in the wrong direction for help. The policy of breaking the Franco-Austrian alliance by the discredit of the Queen, carried out by Frederick the Great through his ambassador von der Goltz, had, as we have seen, been continued by his successor, Frederick William II. Not only as a Prussian but as a Freemason and an Illuminatus, Frederick William, from 1789 onwards, had given constant support to the revolutionaries of France. In September 1790 his Minister and fellow Illuminatus, Bischoffswerder, had dispatched the emissary known as 'le juif Ephraïm' to France, where von der Goltz put him in touch with the revolutionary leaders. His rôle in the riot that prevented the King's journey to Saint-Cloud in April 1791 has already been referred to; according to a recent French writer, a letter addressed by him to Laclos four days later, showing the collusion between the Orléaniste and Prussian intrigues, is preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale. After the riot of the Champ de Mars three months later Ephraïm, who had been distributing pamphlets against the Queen and was accused of plotting her death, was arrested by order of Montmorin and imprisoned at the Abbaye. After two days he was, however, released without his correspondence with the King of Prussia that he carried on him being examined, and he then returned to Prussia. Montmorin was later brought to trial by the Girondins for his action in arresting Ephraïm and for refusing an alliance with Prussia, and in consequence was barbarously butchered during the massacres of September.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, xiii. 493.

Prussia was thus the last of the Powers likely to enter sincerely into any scheme for the rescue of the royal family of France, and Frederick William's reply to the letter of Louis XVI—which apparently took nearly a month to reach him—gave evidence of little enthusiasm. Amidst honeyed expressions of sympathy and esteem he brought forward, as an objection to the Congress, the expense to which he would be put. The same consideration acted as a deterrent to the Emperor.

Fersen's great mistake was his continued reliance on the co-operation of Frederick William II. This is the more extraordinary since in his correspondence he refers to Ephraïm as the emissary of Herzberg of Berlin and as having provided 600,000 livres for agitation, and Marie Antoinette in a letter to Mercy on February 3, 1791, observes: 'The conduct of M. de Goltz and of the Jew Ephraïm here leave no doubts on the intentions of their Court with regard to this country and the house of Austria.'<sup>1</sup> Yet after this we find Fersen writing to Marie Antoinette of 'the Powers which sincerely wish to save you, such as Spain, Russia, Sweden and perhaps Prussia,' whilst he designates Austria, Holland and England as those who wish for the humiliation of France and whose interest lies in the continuation of anarchy and disorders in that country.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Prussia, whose intrigues since the beginning of the Revolution left no room for doubt, was to be approached with confidence whilst England, against whom nothing whatever had been proved, remained under suspicion merely because she might be expected to entertain resentment for the part taken by France in the American War. It was, however, on the good faith of Englishmen that the Swedish supporters of the French monarchy came to depend.

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, II. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, I. 233.

## CHAPTER XII

### FERSEN'S SECRET VISIT TO PARIS

WHILST the King of Prussia and the Emperor continued to hesitate, to delay and to deliberate on such questions as the cost of a Congress, the King of Sweden was all fire and zeal, making fresh plans for the rescue of the royal family and ready to pour out money in their cause. On December 16 his Chamberlain, the Baron de Taube, writes to Fersen saying that Gustavus III has had a new idea. At all costs the King and Queen must be got out of France, and he proposes that this time they should go by road to the coast and escape by sea on an English ship which should take them to Ostend or another port in Flanders. Taube adds:

'We must find an Englishman faithful and courageous enough for us to trust him both on the road from Paris to the sea and from there to some port in Austrian Flanders. This secret must only be confided to two people at most, to the one who conducts them from Paris to the sea, and the one who takes them on board. Do not trust any native [i.e., Frenchman] in the matter; we must only employ Englishmen; they are as bold in action as they are generous. . . . In the name of God, my friend, do not trust a living soul.'<sup>1</sup>

This letter was followed a few days later by one from Gustavus III himself, elaborating his plan. With recollections of the famous berline evidently in his mind he urges that this time the royal family must be content to forgo some of the commodities which are of less importance than the success of the flight; they must be willing to separate, the King going by a different road from the one taken by the Queen and her children. His destination, Gus-

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 275.

tavus III now thinks, should be England. That route, he points out, is the shortest and the safest since no one would suspect Louis XVI of going to England, whilst other considerations in its favour are 'the facility for finding an English ship, the safety there would be in trusting to the faith of a noble and generous nation whose probity is well known, the facility for finding an individual of that nation who would readily devote himself,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter of January 24, Fersen tells Marie Antoinette briefly of this idea, saying that the King of Sweden and also the Empress of Russia insist on a new attempt at flight. The plan of Gustavus III is that 'it should be carried out by sea and by Englishmen of which only two should be confided in.' <sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, in spite of the secrecy with which Louis XVI had approached the King of Prussia, a rumour had reached the Assembly that negotiations with the Powers were on foot, and on December 14 it had delivered an ultimatum to two German Princes—the Electors of Treves and Mayence—ordering them to disperse the bands of émigrés collected on their borders, failing which an army of 150,000 men was to be assembled on the French frontier. This threat had the effect of rousing Leopold II to action. Rejecting the idea of the Congress to which the King of Prussia had given a half-hearted consent in his reply to Louis XVI, the Emperor preferred to have immediate recourse to military measures, and firmly declaring that he would tolerate no invasion of Imperial territory in the States ruled over by the Electors, he ordered troops to defend the frontier.

Thus the answer to the armed Congress proposed by Marie Antoinette was the threat of armed invasion by the Assembly, and the first step towards war had been taken by the new legislators of France.

The fact was that the Jacobins dreaded the idea of a Congress which would bring moral support to the aid of the monarchy and might end in peace by negotiation. On the

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i. 290.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ii. 145.

other hand, by appealing to the martial spirit of the French and representing the Powers as the aggressors they hoped to rally the whole nation round them and put an end to all further attempts at intervention.

The Constitutionnels, however, were opposed to war, which would inevitably end either in the victory of the émigrés or of the Jacobins, leaving them and their Constitution high and dry. As long as they had only Louis XVI to deal with there could be no question of re-establishing the old régime which he did not desire, but once the Princes had returned to France in triumph they would be content with nothing less. Whilst equally dreading the domination of the Jacobins they were, however, obliged to make common cause with them against the Powers; accordingly the Triumvirate now drew up a Memoir which they requested Marie Antoinette to send to her brother, urging him to abandon the cause of the émigrés, justifying the ultimatum sent to the German Princes and protesting against the measures the Emperor had taken to defend their frontiers against invasion. Marie Antoinette, afraid of being suspected of encouraging the Emperor in any militant designs and depending on the Triumvirs for her sole support, dispatched the Memoir but followed it by a secret letter to her brother saying she had been forced to send it as a matter of personal safety in the same way as the letter she had written in July.<sup>1</sup>

In reality she was not sorry to think that matters were coming to a head. She had done nothing to provoke war, indeed she believed her Congress would have averted it, but if the Jacobins chose to launch it, well, let them have it and take the consequences. 'The imbeciles,' she writes to Fersen, 'can they not see that if they do such a thing they will be helping us?'<sup>2</sup> For once war had been declared by the Assembly and the frontier violated, the Powers would be free to march to the rescue of the royal family and no one

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II*, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, 1. 271, date of December 7, 1791.

could say they had done so at her invitation. Now that the idea of the Congress had failed, this seemed to be the only hope; there was no other way out of the intolerable situation.

For in spite of the improvement that had taken place after the signing of the Constitution the position of the royal family was unbearable. A guard still slept across their doors at night. 'We are watched like criminals,' the Queen wrote to Mme de Polignac, 'and this constraint is truly horrible to bear. To be constantly in fear for those belonging to one, not to be able to go near a window without being overwhelmed by insults, or to take the poor children out of doors without exposing these dear innocents to vociferations, what a position, dear heart! Again, if one had only one's own griefs, but to tremble for the King, for all that is dearest to one in the world for present friends (amies), for absent friends (amies), is a burden too heavy to endure, but, I have already told you, you all (vous autres) sustain me. Good-bye, dear heart, let us trust in God, who sees our consciences and who knows whether we are not animated by the truest love for this country. I embrace you. Marie Antoinette.'<sup>1</sup>

Louis XVI indeed had been warned that attempts were being made to poison him and hardly dared to touch the dishes placed before him. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Marie Antoinette prayed for rescue. In a private interview with Simolin, the Russian ambassador, she urged him to appeal to Leopold II for help. 'Tell the Emperor,' she said, 'that the nation has too great a need for the King and his son for there to be anything to fear, it is they who must be saved; as for myself, I fear nothing and I would rather incur all possible dangers than go on living in this state of degradation and unhappiness.'<sup>2</sup>

It was then that Gustavus III returned with fresh energy

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in facsimile by Beauchesne, *Louis XVII*, i. 116, and quoted by La Rocheterie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 4.



to his plan for flight and Fersen was ordered to go in person and put it before the royal prisoners.

The journey which he now took is described by Mlle Söderhjelm as 'Fersen's clandestine visit to Paris,' and produced by her with all the air of a new discovery. Why 'clandestine,' a word that suggests conduct of an underhand and almost shameful kind? We do not speak of 'clandestine correspondence' when referring to secret diplomatic communications. Fersen's visit to Paris was, of course, secret, and is no discovery of Mlle Soderhjelm's, for it has been mentioned by every historian since it was first revealed in the correspondence published by the Baron de Klinckowström in 1877. The adjective chosen by Mlle Söderhjelm is apparently intended to lend colour to her theory of an amorous rendezvous between Fersen and Marie Antoinette on this occasion; it will be seen what grounds there are for this supposition.

That the utmost secrecy was necessary for Fersen's journey to Paris is obvious, since a warrant for his arrest had been issued by the Assembly for the part he had taken in the flight to Varennes. Besides, the royal family were so strictly guarded that it was difficult for any of their friends to gain admission to the Tuileries. For Fersen it was not only difficult but extremely dangerous and Marie Antoinette at first thought the risk too great to be attempted. In his long letter of November 26 he had written to her: 'Let me know about the possibility of going to see you quite alone and without a servant in case I am ordered to do so by the King [of Sweden]; he has already thrown out a hint that he wished it.'<sup>1</sup> And Marie Antoinette had answered that it was absolutely impossible though she had 'an extreme desire' to see him.<sup>2</sup> However, on January 21, Fersen records in his Journal: 'The Queen has consented that I should go to Paris.'

In order to gain access to the Tuileries plans had to be made carefully beforehand with the Baron de Goguelat,

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, i, 258.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i, 268.

who was now acting as the Queen's private secretary and arranged all interviews that were to be held with her. Goguelat was to meet Fersen on his arrival in Paris and get him secretly into the Château the same evening.

On February 11, Fersen, wearing a wig and disguised as a courier, carrying letters he had written himself purporting to be messages from the King of Sweden to the Court of Portugal, set forth with his orderly, Reutersvaerd, and his little dog, Odin, as his sole companions, on his perilous adventure. All went well as far as Paris, which he reached at half-past five in the afternoon of February 13.

According to the entry in his Journal, published by the Baron de Klinckowström, Fersen says that on his arrival in Paris he waited about in the street for the Baron de Goguelat, who did not appear until seven o'clock, and then, at what hour he does not specify, he went to the Château and saw the Queen but not the King. On the following day, the 14th, he writes: 'Saw the King at six o'clock in the evening,' and he goes on to relate the conversation he had with both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.<sup>1</sup> This evidently began with the plan of escape Gustavus III had ordered Fersen to put before them, for in the first lines of the entry in his Journal he records that the King would not consent to fly—'he cannot because he is so strictly guarded, but to tell the truth he has scruples about it, having so often promised to stay, for he is a good man.'

Louis XVI still seemed to favour the idea of a Congress but, in spite of Fersen's persuasions, showed no inclination to resume his former authority. Then in a sudden moment of confidence he went on to say: 'Ah, there, we are alone and we can speak out. I know that I am accused of weakness and irresolution, but nobody has ever been in my position. I know that I missed the right moment, it was the 14th of July [1789], that was the time to go and I wished it, but what was to be done when Monsieur himself begged me not to start and the Maréchal de Broglie, who

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii, 6.

was in command, answered me: "Yes, we can go to Metz, but what shall we do when we get there?" I missed the right moment and since then I have never found it again. I have been abandoned by everyone.'

In those two phrases, 'nobody has ever been in my position' and 'I have been abandoned by everyone,' Louis XVI summed up the whole tragedy of his life. No king had ever been in his position, no ruler had ever had such problems to face as those that had confronted him from the first moment of his reign; let those who blame him consider what they would have done under the circumstances. All the while his worst foes had been those of his own household, his brothers had never supported him from the outset—the Comte de Provence had actually intrigued against him—his Ministers one after another had failed him, his advisers had given him false counsels, his friends had deserted him; truly, he had been abandoned by everyone. Only the Queen stood by him, that sentinel, as Mirabeau had said, watching over the safety of the King.

Marie Antoinette had much to tell Fersen about the flight to Varennes and the sufferings of the royal family after their return, which she evidently described with her usual liveliness and, one guesses, even with gleams of humour. Then she spoke of the Triumvirate of whom only two were left, since Barnave had now quitted the field, adding the surprising fact that Duport and Lameth, whom she saw from time to time, 'told her incessantly that there was no remedy but foreign troops; without this all was lost.' Thus it appears that after urging the Queen to discourage intervention, the former 'enragés' had come over to the policy of intervention *by armed force*. As to the Ministers, the Queen said they were all 'traitors betraying the King, with the exception of Bertrand de Molleville, who, alone, could do nothing.'

The entry ends abruptly at the end of the Queen's conversation without any account of Fersen's departure from the Château.

Baron de Klinckowström gives no more extracts from the Journal until a week later, February 21, the day that Fersen set forth on his return journey to Brussels.

This was all that was known about Fersen's secret visit to Paris until 1930, when Mlle Soderhjelm came out with a fuller account of the affair contained in the entries for the days between February 14 and 21 which the Baron had omitted. From these it appears that there was another woman concerned in this adventure of Fersen's, namely Mrs. Sullivan, who had returned with Quintin Craufurd to his house in the Rue de Clichy, and here Fersen remained in hiding, unknown to Craufurd, whilst he was in Paris. The length of his stay in France was prolonged by passport difficulties, as he explains in a letter to Taube of February 26, where he mentions that in order to fill up the time he spent four days at Tours and Fontainebleau, returning to Mrs. Sullivan again on February 19.

Fersen gives a very amusing account of the days he spent in the Rue de Clichy, describing how, in order to conceal himself from Craufurd, who could not be expected to tolerate his rival's presence in his house—'El,' that is to say Éléonore Sullivan, lodged him in two rooms on an upper floor belonging to her maid Joséphine who, as well as the other maidservant, knew of his presence there but was given to understand that Fersen was the son of Mrs. Sullivan by the Duc de Wurtemberg—whose mistress she had been—and that he had fled from his father's estates.

Fersen seems to have found the whole thing very good fun: he relates how comfortable he was, with a cheerful fire, books to read and an excellent supper 'of chicken, soup and compôte.' Food, he explains, was taken up to him on the pretext that it was for Joséphine, and he adds: 'When they were alone I had little, when they had guests I had more,' and he chuckles over the fact that sometimes he [Craufurd] 'ate my leavings, thinking they were hers [Mrs. Sullivan's].'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 245.

Poor Baron de Klinckowström, confronted by these revelations—always assuming that he and Mlle Söderhjelm copied from the one and only original—evidently felt they were not calculated to increase veneration for the memory of his family hero, so thought it better to leave out all the entries for those days and at the same time slightly to alter the text of the one for Monday, February 13, relating to Fersen's arrival in Paris at 5.30 in the evening of that day. Thus, after Fersen's account of how the Baron de Goguelat had failed to meet him as arranged, the concluding words of the entry are made to read:

'Went to the Queen, passed by my usual way for fear of the National Guards; did not see the King. (Allé chez la reine, passé par mon chemin ordinaire, peur des gardes nationaux; pas vu le roi.)'<sup>1</sup>

Mlle Söderhjelm, however, gives a different version of this last passage in the photostat of the page of Fersen's Journal which forms the frontispiece of her book and which, incidentally, she has not copied correctly in the printed text,<sup>2</sup> for although she accuses M. de Heidenstam of transcribing incorrectly,<sup>3</sup> it will be noticed that her own transcriptions do not tally absolutely with the originals which have been reproduced in facsimile, one by her and one by M. de Heidenstam.<sup>4</sup> According to the photostat the last words of this entry for February 13 read thus:

'alle chez elle passe par mon chemin ordinaire peur des gard: nat: son logement a merveille pas vu le roi.'<sup>5</sup> Then follows a smudged erasure which Mlle Soderhjelm does not profess to have deciphered, but which she says one may guess (on peut deviner) to conceal the words 'resté là.'

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> p. 242, where the words 'pas vu le roi' are omitted.

<sup>3</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 381.

<sup>4</sup> See photostat of Fersen's letter to Sophie of January 26, 1793, given by O. G. de Heidenstam, *Marie Antoinette, Fersen et Barnave*, and transcription on p. 324 which is not given with perfect accuracy; but Mlle Soderhjelm's transcription of the same letter on p. 277 of her book is still less correct.

<sup>5</sup> All these quotations from Fersen's Journal are given without stops or accents as in the original published by Mlle Soderhjelm.

The entry for the next day begins: 'Très beau et doux vu le Roi à 6 h. du soir . . .'

Thus, Mlle Söderhjelm goes on to observe, it appears from Fersen's Journal that 'he remained with the Queen from 6 o'clock on Monday afternoon until 10 o'clock on Tuesday evening,' and she adds that he evidently had reasons for wishing to be alone with her which again 'we can guess.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, we are asked to believe, on the strength of these two guesses of Mlle Söderhjelm's, that Fersen not only spent the intervening twenty-eight hours in the Queen's bedroom but passed the night in her arms! Has ever a more flimsy bit of evidence been put forward in a book that purports to be serious history?

It is necessary to go into this point meticulously because it has recently been made a fresh ground of accusation against Marie Antoinette, and it has actually been said that if throughout the eighteen years she had known Fersen she had never left the path of virtue, the night of February 13, 1792, provides the one seriously compromising incident in her career.

Now even if Mlle Söderhjelm were right in assuming that it was the Queen to whom Fersen referred as 'elle' on the night of his arrival in Paris—and as the Baron de Klinckowström made it appear—what would it show? Passing over the inaccuracy of six o'clock, for Fersen says he waited about in the street for Goguelat till seven o'clock and does not give the hour at which he went to 'her,' it might seem that some time in the evening of the 13th Fersen went to the Château and had an interview with Marie Antoinette, but did not see Louis XVI. If so, it would not be at all extraordinary, for the following reason.

At this moment, as has been said, the royal family were very closely guarded and, owing to rumours that they were again contemplating flight, vigilance had increased during the past few weeks. Goguelat, in making his plans for getting Fersen into the Château, had therefore to make sure

<sup>1</sup> *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 247.

of a favourable hour, a point of great importance to the success of the venture. Thus when it had been a question of an earlier date Fersen wrote to Marie Antoinette on January 24: 'I will make all my arrangements to arrive on the 3rd at six o'clock in the evening,'<sup>1</sup> and in a letter of January 29 he said to Taube: 'My arrival in Paris is fixed for the 3rd of February at six o'clock in the evening. I shall start from here on the 1st, since my health is not good enough for me to travel much at night and I must arrive punctually (à l'heure).'<sup>2</sup> It is evident therefore that six o'clock was the one moment of the day when means could be found for reaching the King and Queen; possibly a change of guard took place then or some other circumstance which facilitated access to them. Quintin Craufurd relates that it was also at six o'clock that Goguelat used to get him into the Château for his secret interviews with Marie Antoinette.<sup>3</sup> Hence everything depended on Fersen arriving in Paris at the appointed hour.

But things did not work out according to plan, for a contretemps occurred at the end of his journey. By taking the entry in his Journal, a sentence at a time, and decoding it from the unaccented and unpunctuated telegraphese in which Fersen was accustomed to write, we can reconstruct the whole drama of that fateful evening:

'arrive sans accident a Paris a 5½ h. du soir sans qu'on nous dise rien.'

So far so good. Fersen has arrived safely and in good time for the interview at six o'clock.

'Laisse descendre mon officier [Reutersvaerd] a l'hotel des Princes Rue de Richelieu pris un fiacre pour aller chez Gog.: Rue Pelletier le fiacre ne savoit pas la rue crainte de ne pas la trouver——'

Fersen is growing anxious. If he does not find Gog. quickly it will be too late to go to the Château. However——

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 146.

<sup>2</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Notices sur Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse et sur Marie Antoinette, Reine de France*, Paris (1819), p. 39.

'un autre fiacre nous l'indiqua Gog. n'y etoit pas—'

What has happened to Goguelat? Just as at Pont de Sommeville on the way to Varennes, he is nowhere to be seen! Fersen's heart sinks further—

'attendu dans la rue jusqu'a 6½ h. pas venu cela m'inquieta—'

Fersen has waited about in the street for over half an hour, the moment for the interview has passed and Gog. has not turned up. What is to be done?

'voulu aller prendre Reuters—'

He decides to wait no longer for Gog. and try to get into the Château, taking Reutersvaerd with him. But—

'il n'avoit pas trouve place a l'hotel des Princes on ne savoit ou il etoit alle—'

Reutersvaerd is not to be found either! Fersen dare not go to the Château alone. He will look for Gog. again—

'retourne chez Gog. pas rentre pris le parti d'attendre dans la rue—'

Fersen takes up his stand in the street again; the precious moments are passing and he will miss his appointment at the Château—

'enfin a 7 h. arrive—'

Gog. has arrived at last! Then comes the explanation of the contretemps—

'Ma lettre netoit arrivée que le même jour a midi et on navoit pu le joindre avant—'

Fersen's letter to Gog. confirming the hour of his arrival had been delayed, hence Gog's. non-appearance at the rendezvous which has thrown everything out. For it is now seven o'clock—too late to go to the Château. Fersen has missed his appointment.

What then did Fersen do? One of two things. The cryptic passage at the end of the entry offers alternative explanations.

It is possible that he went to the Château that night very late, perhaps at midnight. But the King and Queen, having waited in vain for him to arrive at six o'clock as arranged,



had given up expecting him and the King may have gone to bed at eleven o'clock as usual. The Queen, who had always been in the habit of sitting up later than he did and at this period often read half through the night, did not immediately follow his example and was able to receive Fersen when he arrived unexpectedly an hour later. But Fersen had orders to see the King as well and, now that he had gone to bed, it was impossible to reach him. Only at six o'clock in the evening could Fersen be sure of gaining access to him and, as Mlle Söderhjelm herself observes, 'the risks were too great for him to be seen going in and out of the Château more than once.' Therefore, in order to keep him there until the crucial hour of six came round again, the Queen had him concealed in some part of the Palace, where he remained until the following evening. Marie Antoinette's own apartment consisted of a bedroom, dressing-room and salon, beyond which were the billiard-room and dining-room used by the royal family<sup>1</sup>; Fersen might have been hidden in the latter, but some more ingenious method of concealment is suggested by the words 'son logement à merveille,' which could not well apply to the Queen's apartment and certainly not to her bedroom, but would rather signify 'she found a capital hiding-place for me'—where no one would think of looking for him.

The alternative explanation is that Fersen did not go to the Château at all the first evening but remained in hiding at Mrs. Sullivan's. 'Allé chez *elle*' is certainly more likely to bear this meaning for, in the first place, the pronoun is not spelt with a capital as it is in nearly every case where it stands for Marie Antoinette, and is used to denote Mrs. Sullivan throughout the entries in Fersen's Journal during this stay in her house. Then the words 'resté là,' if they really occurred at the end of this passage, unless a code phrase, would also be more likely to apply to Mrs. Sullivan, for the same words will be found at the end of previous entries in his Journal and always in connection with that

<sup>1</sup> See plan of Tuileries given by Lenotre in *Le Drame de Varennes*, p. 28.

lady. Thus, just before the flight to Varennes, several entries contain the words 'chez Sullivan *resté là*,' the last two, underlined, being written in Swedish. In the one for June 19, the night before the flight, Fersen says: 'dine Sullivan reste toutte la soirée, *resté là* au château à 11½ h. jusqu'a minuit.'<sup>1</sup> Here a comma has evidently been omitted after the cryptic phrase in Swedish which clearly denotes an amorous encounter with Mrs. Sullivan; had Fersen, in saying that he went to the Château at half-past eleven, not added the words 'until midnight,' we should doubtless have been asked to believe that he spent that night with the Queen also.

The mysterious passage in the entry of February 13, 1792, might thus be decoded as follows:

*'Allé chez elle.'*

Went to Mrs. Sullivan's.

*'Passé par mon chemin ordinaire.'*

Went in by a back way to avoid Craufurd. It is evident that Fersen habitually did this, for on the 20th he writes that he entered 'par la porte de derrière' with Frantz, Craufurd's servant, and again on the 21st 'on me fit entrer en cachette,' but after he has been openly received by Craufurd, he records that Frantz let him out of the front door, as if this was not his usual exit—or entry.

*'Peur des gard: nat:.'*

Was also afraid of the National Guards. They were not only round the Tuileries, for on the 21st Fersen mentions that there were a number of them round Craufurd's house and he was anxious to avoid them.

*'Son logement à merveille.'*

Mrs. Sullivan had provided a splendid hiding-place for him in Joséphine's rooms at the top of her house. On the 15th Fersen writes: 'Je logeai avec Joséphine qui avait deux chambres.'

*'Pas vu le roi.'*

Did not go to the Château that evening.

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, pp. 180, 181.

'*Resté là.*'

Spent the night with Mrs. Sullivan.

The whole entry would thus be perfectly intelligible, which it is certainly not as interpreted by Mlle Söderhjelm.

Yet one further point requires elucidation. After his return to Brussels Fersen says in a letter to Taube, dated February 26, that he saw both the King and Queen on the night of his arrival:

'Je suis parti d'ici le 11 et je suis arrivé à Paris sans aucune difficulté, le 13 à six heures du soir. J'ai vu LL. MM. le soir, et encore le lendemain au soir à minuit.'<sup>1</sup>

Now in his Journal Fersen says that on the second evening he left the Château at half-past nine; how then are we to account for these two discrepancies between his Journal and his statement to Taube? Mlle Soderhjelm does not attempt to account for the difference in the hour given and assumes that he was lying when he said he had seen the King the first evening, because he did not like to admit, in a letter which might have to be shown to Gustavus III, that he had seen the Queen alone! This is really too absurd. The King of Sweden was well aware that the political schemes he put forward were habitually discussed by Fersen with the Queen rather than with the King and would certainly not have been shocked if Fersen had written: 'I saw the Queen alone the first evening; the King had already gone to bed.' A more plausible explanation is that he did not go to the Château at all on the night of his arrival, but he may not have wished Gustavus III to know there had been a hitch in the arrangements, and so as to impress him with his efficiency and courage made out that he had braved the danger of penetrating into the Tuileries twice over, when in reality he had remained the first evening snugly at Mrs. Sullivan's. Fersen would certainly be more anxious to suppress the fact that he had spent that evening with his mistress than that he had spent it with the Queen. In order to account for a lie one must find a motive, and this

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 177.

hypothesis would provide a stronger one than the fear of outraging Gustavus III's sense of propriety.

But is it necessary to assume that Fersen was lying? From what we know of his character it is easier to suppose that in writing to so close a friend as Taube he would tell the truth about his adventure. And it is just conceivable that this is what may have happened.

Fersen, finding that he had missed his six o'clock appointment at the Château, gave up all idea of going there that evening and, having settled in at Mrs. Sullivan's, wrote up his Journal for the day, ending with the words '*pas vu le Roi.*' Then, late at night, Goguelat may have appeared on the scene or have sent word to him saying that means had been found for getting him into the Château at midnight; whereupon Fersen hurried off there and saw both the King and Queen. But he omitted next day to add this fact to the entry of the 13th; possibly as a matter of prudence. For Fersen was very careful what he wrote in his Journal about his movements; during his trip to Tours and Fontainebleau he does not even mention where he is, and we know of this only from his letter to Taube afterwards; he may therefore have had some reason for not recording his midnight visit to the Château, but only the six o'clock one on the following evening when he left at 9.30. Then in writing to Taube and saying that he saw their Majesties at midnight he may have carelessly made this appear to refer to the second instead of the first evening, just as by a slip of the pen he tells Taube he arrived at six o'clock, whilst in his Journal he says he arrived at 5.30. Thus he was not consciously departing from the truth at all.

On the whole of this episode it is, however, only possible to speculate. In the sort of secret service work Fersen was doing it is often necessary, when committing anything to paper, to make use of language understood by oneself alone, and it cannot be too often repeated that Fersen's letters and Journal must not be judged by the rules of everyday life. The entry relating to his arrival in Paris may therefore

mean something totally different to what at first sight appears. But whatever construction we may place on it no line of conjecture can lead us to admit Mlle Söderhjelm's preposterous theory of Fersen remaining in the Queen's bedroom from 6 p.m. on the first evening to 10 p.m. on the second—hours that do not tally with those given anywhere by Fersen. Yet responsible French historians, without examining the evidence for themselves, have placidly accepted her conclusions, and on the smudge which Mlle Söderhjelm has guessed to conceal the words 'resté là,' a whole 'night of love' has been constructed! M. Louis Madelin indeed goes one better, and to the twenty-eight hours Mlle Söderhjelm declares this amorous adventure to have lasted, adds another eight, making it thirty-six in all and thus comprising not one but two whole nights of love! <sup>1</sup>

Of all the aspersions recently made on the virtue of Marie Antoinette this is perhaps the most grotesque. Apart from what we know of her character and of her attachment to Louis XVI, is it conceivable that at such a time as this, 'watched,' as she says, 'like a criminal,' with a guard sleeping across her bedroom door, she would have dared, even if she had wished it, to engage in an amorous intrigue and keep her lover in her room for twenty-eight hours?

In reality, as far as the Queen is concerned, throughout this episode in Fersen's career, romance is conspicuous by its absence. Not one word has been recorded of what passed when, on the evening of February 14, Fersen took his leave of Marie Antoinette; the whole of the entry in his Journal for this day is singularly unemotional; nowhere is there any hint of personal sadness on his part or the Queen's, nothing to suggest that either realized this was in all probability to be their last meeting on earth, not a tear or sigh at parting, not even any mention of their saying farewell. All we know is that some time that evening—whether at half-past nine or midnight—Fersen left the Queen for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Madelin, *Le Crépuscule de la Monarchie* (1936), pp. 305, 306.

The Baron de Klinckowstrom has made it appear that they met again a week later, for in Fersen's Private Journal as published by him, the entry for February 21, the day that Fersen left Paris, contains this passage:

'I went with Gog. to take leave of the King and Queen. The Queen sent word to me that the reply to the bad Memoir she had sent the Emperor, made by Barnave, Duport and Lameth, was detestable. I took tea and supper with them [i.e., with the King and Queen]. At midnight I left them. Frantz let me out by the front door.' <sup>1</sup>

This, of course, does not make sense. Why should the Queen send a message to Fersen whilst she was saying good-bye to him? And how could Frantz, Craufurd's servant, let Fersen out of the door of the Tuileries? Here Mlle Söderhjelm's version of the Private Journal is evidently the correct one, but the whole entry is so confused that it is very difficult to grasp its meaning. The gist of it seems to be that at six o'clock in the morning of the 21st Fersen slipped out of Craufurd's house to find Reutersvaerd and make arrangements with him for leaving Paris that evening. Then, after being let in again by the back door, he brought off the coup he had planned with Mrs. Sullivan by writing her a letter which she was to show to Craufurd, saying he had just arrived in Paris. 'We played our part well,' says Fersen, 'and he believed it.' At that moment Goguelat came with a message from the Queen about the reply to the Memoir drawn up by the Triumvirate for the Emperor, which 'was detestable.' In the evening Fersen took tea and supper with Craufurd and Mrs. Sullivan before starting on his return journey, and repeated to Craufurd the same story he had told in his letter to Mrs. Sullivan about his supposed arrival that morning in Paris. At midnight Frantz let him out of the front door instead of the back way he was accustomed to use when his presence had to be concealed from Craufurd.

If the Baron de Klinckowström could not make head or

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 8.

tail of this rigmarole it is hardly surprising, for in the same sentence 'elle' is made to refer in one case to Mrs. Sullivan and in another to the Queen. This provides an instance of the misconstructions that might be placed on certain passages when decoding Fersen's Journal. But however excusable the Baron's bewilderment may have been, it is impossible to deny that in this case he deliberately altered the text of the entry, inventing the words 'I went with Goguelat to take leave of the King and Queen,' and making it appear that it was with them Fersen took tea and supper—presumably with the object of suppressing the whole episode of Mrs. Sullivan. Thus it seems clear that where the Baron took liberties with the documents in his possession he did so *in order to shield Fersen, not Marie Antoinette*.

That Fersen did not see the King and Queen on the day of his departure is evident from the letter to Taube in which after speaking of the two visits paid them on the 13th and 14th he says: 'I returned to Paris [from the country] on the 19th at six o'clock in the evening; I did not dare to go to the Château. I wrote to find out whether there were orders for me and I left at midnight on the 21st.'<sup>1</sup>

Fersen's secret visit to Paris is seen, therefore, to have been a purely diplomatic mission in which it is impossible to discover any amorous motive, for even his concealment by Mrs. Sullivan was part of the plot. Fersen had to remain in hiding whilst in Paris, and Mrs. Sullivan, not only as his chère amie but as a fellow-confederate in his plans on behalf of the royal family, was only too ready to give him refuge. If Craufurd had to be kept out of the affair there were evidently other reasons besides jealousy, for ten days later Marie Antoinette, writing to Fersen about their secret methods of communication, says: 'Speak to Mrs. Sullivan about what she said to Jarjays for getting me . . . biscuit boxes . . . but be careful, Mr. Craufurd knows nothing about this.'<sup>2</sup> Craufurd was clearly not altogether trusted either by Marie Antoinette or Fersen, and later on Fersen

<sup>1</sup> Klinkowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 177.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 220.

speaks of him in his *Journal* as 'mad, bizarre and fantastic.'<sup>1</sup>

The immense risks involved by the journey to Paris seem to have been hardly justified by results. In reality no decisions had been reached; the King and Queen had definitely refused to attempt the plan of flight put before them by Gustavus III, and Fersen in a letter to Taube agreed that it was now 'physically impossible on account of the surveillance, which is extreme. They are never let out of sight (*Ils sont gardés à vue*). . . .'<sup>2</sup> But he consoled himself and his royal master by the assurance that they were anxious to get out of their present position, that they recognized the uselessness of trying to come to terms with the rebels and that the only hope now lay in force and help from abroad.

Gustavus III, however, continued to elaborate his project for escape by sea. 'I persist,' he wrote to Fersen, 'in regarding the flight of the King of France as absolutely necessary. . . . I think the only measures for the King to take are to confide in Englishmen,' and he proposed to write himself to George III.

Meanwhile the Powers continued to discuss the idea of a Congress on which Marie Antoinette again set her hopes. Leopold II seemed now disposed to take still stronger action. Mercy, in conversation with de Breteuil, said: 'It is no longer declarations that are needed; the Emperor feels it and has at last changed his system.' And grasping his sword Mercy added: 'It is this we need; the Emperor feels it, he has decided on it and before long it will happen; there is no other way to save France and all Europe.'<sup>3</sup>

Then suddenly two bombshells burst upon the Tuileries, upon Brussels, upon Coblenz, upon Europe.

On March 1 Leopold II died, it was said as the result of drinking poisoned soup. The fact was accredited in diplomatic circles, for the official account received in London

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Klnckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 205.



by Lord Grenville stated that 'the Emperor died of poison after twenty-six hours of suffering.'<sup>1</sup> Marie Antoinette was not surprised, for she had read in the report of a sitting of the Jacobin Club that when the Emperor joined the coalition of kings for the rescue of the royal family, the remark had been made that 'a pastry crust could settle that matter.'<sup>2</sup>

A fortnight later, on March 16, Gustavus III was mortally wounded by the pistol shot of an assassin at a masked ball in Stockholm and died on the 29th of the same month. The plot, hatched in the Masonic Lodges, was carried out by Captain Anckarström, an Illuminatus and disaffected noble, and it was said that the King's brother, the Duc de Sudermanie, a high initiate and occultist, had singularly encouraged the conspirators.

So the secret societies had their revenge on the adept who had turned against their designs. The soul had been taken from the 'coalition of Kings'; henceforth intervention was to be a farce that could only hasten the doom of the royal family of France. All hope for the prisoners at the Tuileries was at an end.

<sup>1</sup> *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Correspondance 'Angleterre,'* vol 580, f° 147.

<sup>2</sup> Campan, p. 319.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE GIRONDIN MINISTRY

By the beginning of 1792, the internal situation of France was fast approaching a fresh crisis. The King's acceptance of the Constitution was now definitely seen to have been in vain; the Assembly, dominated by the Girondins, had been steadily increasing in violence and no methods of conciliation seemed to be of any avail.

The royalists, of course, attributed this solely to the King's weakness. But in order to understand the motives that had guided Louis XVI up to this point one must not view him through the eyes of contemporaries.

For in reality he had anticipated the principle of constitutional monarchy as it exists in our own country, under which the King can say to his Ministers: 'I think you are mistaken in adopting this measure, in my opinion it is dangerous, but if you insist I will append my signature to it.' No one dreams of calling this 'duplicity,' yet it is the term that is persistently applied to Louis XVI for appearing to conform with a Constitution which he had frankly admitted that he regarded as unworkable but on which the nation had set its heart. In yielding to what he believed to be the people's wishes he seemed to the royalists to be merely following the path of least resistance, but they were unable to appreciate his motive in adopting this course, which was the innate conviction that conciliation rather than obstinate resistance would in the end lead to peace.

It must, moreover, be admitted that this policy very nearly succeeded. As we have seen, his acceptance of the Constitution was followed by an outburst of real popularity, whilst the Queen's conquest of the Constitutionnels had

robbed the Constituent Assembly of its most seditious elements. But for Robespierre's clever manœuvre in getting all the deputies of that Assembly excluded from the one that succeeded it, Louis XVI would in all probability have had the Assembly on his side. By March of 1792 he had almost won over his Ministers, for it will be noticed that whenever Louis XVI was brought into personal contact with men in public life he usually ended by gaining their respect. It was thus that the growing insolence of the Assembly outraged the feelings of the Ministers who had entered office inflamed with revolutionary doctrines. A letter from Condorcet, then President of the Assembly, to the King, in which the titles of 'Sire' and 'Majesty' were studiously omitted, filled them with indignation; in January a gratuitous attack on Louis XVI by Brissot in his paper the *Patriote Français* had been made the subject of discussion at a Council meeting. But the Ministers and Louis XVI himself decided that it was wiser to ignore seditious pamphlets.

Bertrand de Molleville alone realized the folly of this policy. 'They did not pay attention to the fact that if in normal times and under a well-ordered government one can safely disdain the extravagant insolence of a journalist, it is not the same in times of revolution and disorder. . . .'<sup>1</sup> The mistake of Louis XVI's government had been, from the beginning, not only the failure to put down seditious writings but to refrain from encouraging counterblasts. Arthur Young had pointed out in 1789 the incredible supineness of the authorities in not employing 'writers of talent' to refute the 'inflammatory productions' with which the press then swarmed. Two years later, at the instigation of La Fayette, numbers of propagandists were enlisted on behalf of the King and, as the contents of the *armoire de fer* revealed, large sums were spent, not, as has been represented, in bribing writers and speakers over to the royal cause but, as one of these documents expressly states, in remunerating those 'whose principles and zeal' had already

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, i. 224,

rallied them around the King.<sup>1</sup> Even the necessity for an Intelligence Service had at last been recognized, and a Police Bureau of Surveillance (*Bureau de Police surveillante*) formed part of the scheme of counter-revolution.<sup>2</sup> But all this had come too late; a movement so skilful in its organization and so extensive in its designs could only have been nipped in the bud; by 1791 the Revolution could no longer be arrested through propaganda, the time for words had passed.

Led by Bertrand de Molleville the Ministers now attempted to form secretly a royalist group in the Assembly with the object of bringing over the waverers who formed the centre party to the side of the King. But the whole scheme was betrayed by de Narbonne, less it would seem out of deliberate disloyalty to the King—since, according to d'Allonville, he later on concerted a plan with Mme de Stael for rescuing the royal family by flight to Normandy—than from personal antagonism to Bertrand de Molleville whom he was determined to drive from office. Bertrand's position now became so impossible that on March 9 he finally resigned and was succeeded at the Admiralty by Lacoste. The King had thus lost his one faithful and devoted Minister.

The resignation of Bertrand was followed by a break-up of the whole Ministry; between March 15 and 20 Duport du Tertre, Tarbé and Cahier de Gerville all followed his example, whilst the Comte Louis de Narbonne was replaced at the War Office by de Grave. It was then that Louis XVI took a further step along the path of concession by appointing a Ministry chosen for him by Brissot, leader of the Girondin party in the Assembly.

Bertrand de Molleville observed that the inevitable result of admitting revolutionaries to one's Council was that they would take the credit for all popular measures and throw the blame for unpopular ones on the monarchy.<sup>3</sup> The plan, however, was again quite in line with modern opinion, which

<sup>1</sup> *Armoire de Fer*, i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires*, i. 358.

holds that men whose energies have been wholly devoted to destruction are the best to enlist in the work of construction, since they cannot be suspected of a reactionary policy and are therefore able to carry out legislation which would meet with the most violent popular indignation if emanating from the 'Right.' This was precisely the idea of Louis XVI as set forth in his message to the Assembly on March 24:

'Profoundly touched by the disorders that afflict France and by the duty that the Constitution imposes on me to watch over the maintenance of order and public tranquillity, I have never ceased to employ all the means it places in my power, to enforce the laws. I had chosen for my first agents men recommended by the honesty of their principles and their opinions; they have left the Ministry. I have thought it my duty to replace them by men accredited for their popular opinions. You have so often repeated to me that this was the only way to re-establish law and order; I have thought it my duty to employ it so as to leave malevolence no pretext for doubting my sincere desire to co-operate with all my might in the prosperity and welfare of my country.' <sup>1</sup>

The Ministry selected by Brissot was, however, not as revolutionary as might have been expected. At this date no definitely Republican policy had been formulated; the minds of the Jacobins were still in a state of flux, vacillating between Orléanisme and aimless destruction. Brissot himself, once an impassioned royalist, then an Orléaniste, had shown himself a Republican at the time of the petition of the Champ de Mars; a year later he was to turn against the idea of a Republic. His candidates for office were of the same uncertain nature as himself and displayed no uniformity of aim.

The first appointment was made on March 16, when Foreign Affairs were confided to General Dumouriez, a political adventurer, reputed to be an Orléaniste but more attached to the Duc de Chartres than to his father the Duc d'Orléans, and at the same time an advocate of a

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, xi. 719.

Universal Republic, the dream of the Freemasons and Illuminati.<sup>1</sup> By way of celebrating his appointment to the Ministry, Dumouriez presented himself at the Jacobin Club, where he put on the newly devised *bonnet rouge*, symbol of red revolution, and threw himself, weeping with emotion, into the arms of Robespierre, amidst universal applause.<sup>2</sup>

According to the *Mémoires* of Dumouriez the Queen expressed the wish to have a private interview with him which filled him with fears for his safety, since at that moment any suspicion of attachment to her person would have brought down the wrath of the Jacobins upon his head. Dumouriez, therefore, purposely arrived late so as to cut short the time spent in the Queen's presence, and on arrival he relates that he found her walking up and down, very much flushed, in a state of extreme agitation, that she proceeded to tell him that neither she nor the King could endure the Constitution, that he then reasoned with her calmly on the necessity of maintaining it and ended by winning her confidence.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the extreme improbability that Marie Antoinette would have so far departed from her usual discretion as to make any such compromising admissions to a stranger whom she had no reason to trust, we have a much more plausible account of this interview in the *Mémoires* of Mme Campan, who may here be safely quoted, for Mme de Tourzel observes that the Queen had great confidence in her at that moment.<sup>4</sup> One day, Mme Campan relates, the Queen, who seemed greatly disturbed in her mind, told her that Dumouriez had asked her for an audience, and this being granted, he had thrown himself at her feet and said that though he had thrust his head into the *bonnet rouge* up to his ears, he could not be a Jacobin, that the Revolution had led to a *canaille* of disorganizers only out for pillage and capable of anything. Finally, growing more heated, he

<sup>1</sup> Le Riche, i. 202; d'Allonville, iii. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ferrières, iii. 54; Maugras, *Journal d'un Étudiant*, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 163-165.

<sup>4</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, ii. 109.

had seized the Queen's hand and kissed it in a transport of emotion, crying: 'Allow yourself to be saved!' But Marie Antoinette ended by saying to Mme Campan that one could not believe in the protestations of a traitor, that Dumouriez's conduct was well known and it was wiser not to trust him.<sup>1</sup> Since neither Marie Antoinette at the time, nor Mme Campan long afterwards, could have had any object in inventing this incident, whilst Dumouriez would have every reason to conceal it, Mme Campan's would seem to be the more probable version of what really took place. Dumouriez's account of events during these months of March to June 1792 can only be accepted with reservations where his own interest is concerned.

Of the other Ministers appointed by Brissot only two at first were definitely hostile to the King—Roland de la Platière, formerly inspector-general of commerce at Lyon, where he had founded a Jacobin Club, who was appointed Minister of the Interior on March 23, and Clavière, a Swiss banker noted for his speculations in stocks and shares, who on the same day took over the Finances. Duranthon, who on April 13 became Minister of Justice, seems, like Lacoste, who had succeeded Bertrand de Molleville at the Admiralty, to have been a harmless cipher, noted principally for his indolence. For the moment de Grave still remained at the War Office.

If Louis XVI had only had these six Ministers to deal with all might yet have been well; he little knew that in appointing Roland he had given himself a seventh Minister, one who was to exercise the real power over all the rest, the vain and ambitious wife of Roland who, as Manon Phlipon, had hated kings from her childhood and, already in 1789, had called for the heads of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even Mme Roland was obliged to admit that on closer acquaintance the Ministers discovered that the King was different to 'what he had been painted with the object of degrading him; he was not the brutalized imbecile held up to the contempt of the people.'

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de Mme Roland aux demoiselles Canet*, ii. 573.

'Louis XVI,' she writes, 'had a fine memory and showed much activity; he was never idle and read often. He kept in mind the various treaties made by France with neighbouring powers; he knew his history well and he was the best geographer in his kingdom. . . . One could not present any subject to him whatever it might be, on which he could not express an opinion of his own, founded on facts.'<sup>1</sup>

But Mme Roland has to deplore the narrowness of his views and his feelings 'warped by religious prejudices.'

At first, however, everything went well. Louis XVI, she tells us, 'treated his new Ministers with the greatest good nature.' One suspects that he did not take them very seriously. Roland, tall, thin, pale and mild-looking in his drab-coloured suit, 'like a Quaker in his Sunday best,' says Ferrières, or, as his wife described him, with his 'philosophic dress . . . a few scanty hairs combed across his venerable head,'<sup>2</sup> can have been like nothing the King had ever seen before. From Mme Roland's account of the way in which his Council was conducted it is evident that a very distinct vein of humour underlay the benign attitude of Louis XVI. Leaving the Ministers to talk, he read the *Gazette de France* or the English newspapers; in the discussions that took place, he avoided political questions and led the conversation on to subjects of general interest. 'When it was a question of war he talked of travels, à propos of diplomatic interests he quoted the manners and customs of the countries in question, if the state of France was under examination, he went into details on agriculture and industry,' he questioned Roland about his writings and turned Dumouriez on to tell amusing stories, of which he had an inexhaustible fund, so extravagant as to set even the solemn Roland and Duranthon laughing. In fact, Mme Roland complains, 'the Council was nothing more than a café where they amused themselves by chattering.'<sup>3</sup>

One day, during a dinner at Pétion's, Roland said:

<sup>1</sup> Mme Roland, *Mémoires*, i. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 232, 237; Ferrières, iii. 56.



'People do not know the King; he wishes for what is right and it is slandering him to attribute guilty intentions to him; besides he is not properly appreciated, he has talents, knowledge, a just mind, a prodigious memory. . . . In my capacity as Minister of the Interior, I have, more often than my colleagues, business with the King; I go into his study every day. Well, when one is with him one feels quite at home (*on est avec lui comme en famille*).' And Roland added: 'The King has the goodness to notice one is standing and the kindness to make one sit down.'

The fact was that, as in the case of his previous Ministry, Louis XVI had succeeded in winning over the men who had entered office filled with prejudice against him, and during the first weeks Roland and Clavière returned from these Council meetings enchanted with the King and 'flattering themselves that the Revolution was over.' But this was not at all in accordance with Manon Roland's plans for the future.

'Good God!' she would exclaim impatiently, 'every time I see you start off for the Council with this fine confidence, it always seems to me that you are going to do something silly.'

'I assure you,' Clavière would reply, 'that the King feels perfectly that his interests are bound up with the maintenance of the laws that have just been established; he reasons too pertinently not to be convinced of that truth.' And on one occasion he related that when he himself had shown ignorance of some point in the Constitution the King had caught him out, and taking his copy of it from his pocket had said with a laugh: 'You see, M. Clavière, that I know it better than you do.'

'Faith,' Roland would say, 'if he is not an honest man he is the greatest scoundrel in the kingdom; one cannot dissemble like that.'

But Mme Roland replied that she 'could not believe in love for the Constitution on the part of a man nourished on the prejudices of despotism and accustomed to enjoy it

and whose conduct recently proved the absence of genius and of virtue.' The flight to Varennes, she adds, 'was my great argument.'<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult to imagine a description less applicable to the King of whom Bailly, proposer of the Oath of the Tennis Court, had said: 'Despotism did not enter into his character; he never desired anything but the happiness of his people, it was the only means of persuasion one could employ with him . . . a less good-hearted King, cleverer Ministers and there would have been no Revolution.'<sup>2</sup>

But Mme Roland was bent on his destruction. 'It is pitiable!' she would say indignantly when they described how pleasantly the meetings of the Council had passed, 'you are all in a good temper because you have had nothing to worry you and have been kindly received, I am afraid you are being fooled.'

Determined to disturb the harmony that existed between the King and his Ministers, Mme Roland, who never ceased assuring them that they were dupes and were being led into a trap, took a further step. The six Ministers were in the habit of dining in turn at each other's houses on the three days of the week when the Council meetings were held and of discussing affairs in private during the meal. At the end of a month, however, Roland, instigated by his wife, demanded that she should be present at these ministerial debates. Lacoste and Dumouriez strongly objected to this arrangement and so the first note of discord was brought into the Ministry.

Mme Roland then thought out another clever move. On May 9 she succeeded in having de Grave replaced at the War Office by her ally, Colonel Servan, a man of 'black character and atrabilious vanity,'<sup>3</sup> who had endeared himself to Mme Roland by his diatribes against the Court. From this moment all hope of peace was at an end.

Thus the King's efforts to abide by the Constitution and

<sup>1</sup> Mme Roland, *Mémoires*, i. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Bailly, i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Souvenirs d'Étienne Dumont*, p. 276.

to work with his Jacobin Ministers were brought to nought, and whilst winning over 'the virtuous Roland' he had reckoned without the vanity and furious ambition of his wife.

Would the Queen have been well advised to try and win over Mme Roland? Modern opinion would say yes, and there can be little doubt that such a policy might have gone far to moderate Manon's rancour against the Court; her pique at the fact that Dumouriez was received in private by the Queen is evident from her *Mémoires*. But Marie Antoinette would have disdained any such methods of conciliation and, had she not, how long would they have proved availing? For Mme Roland, like Mirabeau, like Barnave, was powerful only for destruction; the moment that the Girondins attempted to stem the tide of revolution they themselves were swept away, and only three weeks after the Queen's head had fallen, Mme Roland followed her to the scaffold.

Marie Antoinette retained her dignity to the end. Since the Triumvirate had failed her she had taken no part in the internal affairs of France; wrapped in sadness, she found her greatest consolation in her children; 'When I am very unhappy,' she wrote to Fersen, 'I take my little boy in my arms and kiss him with all my heart and that comforts me for the moment.' The Dauphin passionately returned her affection, never losing an opportunity to say sweet and loving things to her. Once in the summer of 1791 when, worn out with anxiety and the ceaseless work of correspondence which occupied all her days, she had taken to her bed, the Dauphin rushed into her room early in the morning crying out: 'Maman, they promise me every day that I shall see you if I am very good; well, I have done everything I was told for three or four days and I have not seen you.' The Queen was so affected that she lost consciousness for three-quarters of an hour.<sup>1</sup>

Pierre de Croze, *Le Chevalier de Boufflers et la Comtesse de Sabran* (1894), p. 270.



*Photo : W. F. Mansell*

THE DAUPHIN

*from the Portrait by Kucharski : In the Versailles-Trianon Collection.*



Another day, in this spring of 1792, the little prince, who was always fond of playing at soldiers, dressed himself up as a knight, and the King, entering into the game, told him that as a 'preux chevalier' he should choose the lady of his thoughts and offer her his heart and arms. Thereupon the Dauphin went up to the Queen and dropping on one knee, took her hand respectfully, saying: 'I make you the lady of my thoughts and I swear to die in defence of your rights against all and everyone; herewith I take my oath.' The Queen kissed him tenderly and the little boy added: 'Here I am then, a knight; already I have the courage, one day I shall have the strength.' But the knight called for a horse and a Captain of the National Guard volunteered to play the part, going down on all-fours with the Dauphin riding proudly on his back.<sup>1</sup> One can picture the Queen looking on through her tears, her little dog joining in the sport—for a moment this tragic family, so made for happy home life and innocent amusements, were able to forget their troubles.

But such moments were rare. How often this spring Marie Antoinette, casting fearful glances at the gardens of the Tuileries, must have longed for the green lawns of Trianon, where she had played peacefully with her children amidst flowers and sunshine in the lilac-scented air. Here, underneath her windows, it was hell let loose: mob orators standing on chairs declaiming horrors against the royal family, overwhelming loyal soldiers or priests with blows and insults. As she looked out one evening a gunner called out to her furiously: 'How I should like to see your head on the point of my bayonet!' Louis XVI was held up to the people as a Nero or Caligula, a sanguinary monster, breathing only murder and carnage, calling foreign troops into France to aid him in the execution of his atrocious designs; Marie Antoinette was now a Messalina given over to the most shameful debauchery, now a fury who had said that the happiest day of her life would be when she could bathe in the blood

<sup>1</sup> Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, ii. 583.

of Frenchmen. The nation was passing rapidly into the state of delirium that was to culminate in the madness of the Terror.

At this moment the call to arms came to rouse it to greater frenzy. The Girondins had not miscalculated when they counted on the martial spirit of the French people to support them in a declaration of war on the young Emperor, Francis II, who had succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Leopold II.

It is important to note that although the Emperor and the King of Prussia had formed an alliance on February 7, and the Duke of Brunswick had been placed at the head of the allied armies on March 7, the plan of the Girondins was not to declare war on the Allies, but only on Austria-Hungary. The King of Prussia had proved too good a friend to the revolutionaries of France to be regarded by them with animosity, and Fersen, for all his blindness to Prussian intrigue, noted during his secret visit to Paris in February that von der Goltz was behaving very badly and was on the best of terms with Pétion. The Duke of Brunswick himself had found favour in the eyes of the Girondins; in December 1791 de Narbonne, at their instigation, had even proposed to make him generalissimo of the French armies and met with no opposition from the principal leaders of the Assembly.<sup>1</sup> I have described elsewhere in detail the intrigues of the Jacobins with Prussia and their idea of actually placing the Duke of Brunswick on the throne of France.<sup>2</sup> This plan, which at first sight seems incomprehensible, may be explained by the fact that the Duke of Brunswick was not only the antagonist of Austria but Grand Master of German Freemasonry, an Illuminatus and a member of the Stricte Observance. It seems, therefore, not impossible that the real idea of his French supporters was a Masonic monarchy, perhaps as the forerunner of the Masonic Republic—the *République Universelle* of the Illuminati. No other theory at any rate provides

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *The French Revolution*, pp. 208, 209, 247.

any explanation of the extraordinary tendresse of the Jacobins for Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick or the backwardness of both the latter in coming to the rescue of the French monarchy.

Louis XVI, whose principal aim throughout the past three years had been to save his country from either internal or external warfare, now found himself obliged to yield to the determination of his Ministers and the will of the Assembly supported by popular clamour. Just as in 1775, war fever had taken hold of the nation. In vain Louis XVI pleaded with the Assembly to pause before plunging France into the horrors of war at a moment when no one wished to attack her; the minds of the Girondins were made up, and on April 20 the King, with tears in his eyes, was forced to declare war on the Emperor under his title of the King of Hungary.

Fersen, still illusioned as to the intentions of Prussia, rejoiced in the belief that the Powers would now be roused to vigorous action. Marie Antoinette, too, felt relieved that the die was cast, and the initiative having come from the Assembly, no accusation of provoking war could be brought against her or the King. But she had reckoned without the ingenuity of the Jacobins who, from this moment, were to represent her perpetually as in collusion with schemes of invasion. The wild fable of an 'Austrian Committee' was launched by Carra, one of the principal supporters of the Duke of Brunswick, who, in his paper, the *Annales Patriotiques*, declared that it was presided over by the Princesse de Lamballe at the Tuileries for the purpose of betraying France to Austria and preparing a Saint-Barthélemy of 'patriots.' Brissot and Gensonné tried in vain to prove the truth of this accusation which even Camille Desmoulin later on held up to ridicule.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Louis XVI was doing everything in his power to prevent the invasion of France, and on May 21 he sent Mallet du Pan to Frankfurt to parley with the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> *Fragment de l'Histoire Secrète de la Révolution*, p. 5.



and the King of Prussia in order to persuade them to hold back their armies and revert to the plan of negotiation.<sup>1</sup> In January Talleyrand had been sent to England with a letter from Louis XVI thanking George III for not intervening in the affairs of France and proposing an alliance between 'two Kings whose reigns had been distinguished by the constant desire to make their people happy.' But Talleyrand, secretly instigated by the Jacobins, offered to hand over several of the French Colonies to England and to demolish the fortifications of Cherbourg—which Louis XVI had visited in triumph on their completion six years earlier—if England would join France in making war on Austria-Hungary.<sup>2</sup> The King's proposal of neutrality was accepted, but Talleyrand himself, regarded as a Jacobin, was received coldly and his further overtures were ignored. 'As for Talleyrand,' Mr. Burges wrote from London to Lord Auckland on May 29, 'he is intimate with Paine, Horne Tooke, Lord Lansdowne and a few more of that stamp, and generally scouted by everyone else.'<sup>3</sup>

Such was the foreign policy of the so-called 'patriots' who accused Louis XVI of betraying the interests of France.

The impossible situation in which he found himself, the declaration of war into which he had been forced and the daily outrages to which he and the Queen were exposed, had now so affected the health of Louis XVI that this summer he again fell a victim to a nervous breakdown, more severe than the one that had overtaken him in the spring of 1791. The author of the *Correspondance Secrète*, after describing the incursion of two or three hundred of the hooligans, who had recently come to be known as the sans-culottes, into the gardens of the Tuileries, goes on to say:

'The King, who is well aware of these movements and who at every moment hears the most atrocious invectives yelled under his windows, has lost that indifference which was

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, ii. 323.

<sup>2</sup> Gouverneur Morris, i. 510, 516.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal and Correspondence of Lord Auckland*, ii. 410.

perhaps falsely attributed to him. He is even far too deeply affected and sometimes so absorbed that his remarks astonish those around him. Recently he did not recognize his son and, as he came near, asked who that child was.' <sup>1</sup> One day, at midnight, he was found wandering alone in the gardens of the Tuileries, far from the Château and near the river, in a state of acute agitation and, when asked where he was going, he replied that he wished to breathe the cool air, although the June night was very cold. For ten whole days he did not utter a word even to his family, but sat sunk in depression; at last Marie Antoinette succeeded in rousing him by throwing herself at his feet and imploring him with tender words to take heart again, saying that if they were to perish it must be with honour.<sup>2</sup>

There can be little doubt that certain of the Jacobins had indeed resolved on their death. All methods for bringing about the deposition of the King, with any show of justice, had failed. The petition of the Champ de Mars had ended in a reverse for the revolutionaries, the King's acceptance of the Constitution had set the tide flowing strongly in his favour; from that moment, as Bertrand de Molleville declared, he 'never varied a single instant from the resolution to execute the Constitution faithfully by every means in his power.' He had endured the affronts of the Assembly, the attacks on his lawful authority, the policy of his Girondins Ministers 'to mortify and kill him by pin-pricks'—as Dumouriez himself expressed it—with the utmost patience. No pretext could be found for dethroning him. There was henceforth nothing for it but to kill him.

They did not, however, dare to carry out the crime themselves. Any attempt to bring the King to trial would at this juncture inevitably have met with insurmountable opposition. The position of the men who eighteen months later were to play the part of regicides was still too weak, the King's position was still too strong, the people in the

<sup>1</sup> Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, ii. 600, date of June 8, 1792.

<sup>2</sup> Maugras, *Journal d'un Etudiant*, p. 248; Campan, p. 328.

vast majority were for him. But in the underworld of Paris there lurked the beast that thirsted for blood. If, as on the 5th of October, it could be driven forth against the royal family, the coup which then had failed might this time be brought off successfully.

The Tuileries, however, was well guarded. For although the King's old bodyguard had been dissolved a new one had been accorded him by the Constitution composed of 1800 men, of which two-thirds were National Guards and one-third troops of the line, under the command of a staunch royalist, the Duc de Brissac. Besides these there were the Swiss Guards, who, under the terms of their enlistment, could not be disbanded, and the Grenadiers of the National Guard sincerely devoted to the King. In the main all these troops were loyal, although their patience had been sorely tried by mobs of rioters who assailed them with insults whenever they appeared in the gardens. Any invasion of the Château thus appeared impracticable as long as they remained in control of its defences.

A pretext had therefore to be found for depriving the King of his defenders, and it was now announced that he again contemplated flight. This we know to be untrue, since on the occasion of Fersen's secret visit to Paris he had definitely refused to fly, and Marie Antoinette's secret correspondence with Fersen afterwards shows that the idea had been finally abandoned. At the same time the Jacobins declared that the King's bodyguard was composed of aristocrats, émigrés and refractory priests, a baseless fable which nevertheless served as a pretext, and on May 29, at the instigation of Brissot, the whole bodyguard was disbanded and its commander, the Duc de Brissac, sent to prison at Orléans as a preliminary to his assassination three months later.

The way was now clearer for a march on the Château, and the Jacobins set about devising a plan by which the populace could be driven to the required pitch of revolutionary fury. Accordingly they demanded the King's

sanction to two iniquitous decrees. In the first they returned to the charge against the non-juring priests. Louis XVI had already refused to sanction the decree of November 29, 1791, whereby, on the denunciation of a few 'active citizens'—a new term that appeared for the first time in the Constitution—they could be driven from their parishes and even from the department in which these were situated. But, since according to the Constitution the Assembly could not introduce the same bill twice in the course of a session, the Jacobins, in order to get round this difficulty, drew it up in a different form, making it still more severe and ordaining that the priests who had been denounced were to be deported from the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The second decree was directly aimed at the safety of the royal family. After consultation with Mme Roland, Servan proposed that a camp of 20,000 confederates should be formed outside Paris for the Fête of the Federation on July 14, the pretext being to ensure the tranquillity of the capital and to defend the Assembly—against what danger was not specified. Servan's action was directly illegal since, according to the terms of the Constitution, the King was the supreme head of the army, and the plan was put forward by Servan without reference to the King or even to the other Ministers. Its real object was very apparent. For the camp was to be recruited from federated National Guards chosen by the Jacobin Clubs all over the country but particularly in the south, where the revolutionary spirit was most ardent. The decree was passed on June 8 by the Assembly, but met with opposition from all sane men, the King's Council was violently divided on the subject, La Fayette wrote from his camp at Maubeuge urging Louis XVI to refuse his sanction.

At the same time deputations from the National Guards arrived at the Assembly to protest against the slur which they considered the proposal implied, making it appear that they were not to be depended on to defend the capital.

<sup>1</sup> Beaulieu, iii. 334.

But the petitioners, accused by Vergniaud of 'inconceivable audacity,' were driven from the hall.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that at this moment the King had not only recovered from his nervous breakdown, but had become inspired with a sudden energy and power of decision such as he had never before displayed. From June 8 to August 10, in the face of the most appalling danger, he stood his ground with the utmost resolution and with a courage that astounded contemporaries and should, if adequately recorded by historians, have evoked the admiration of posterity. This change in his attitude may perhaps be accounted for by the influence of the Queen. Whatever the cause the King firmly refused his sanction to the two decrees.

It was now that Dumouriez failed him miserably. The Council, as has been said, was divided on the question of the camp of 20,000 men; Roland, Servan and Clavière supporting the plan, Dumouriez, Lacoste and Duranthon opposing. Dumouriez in his *Mémoires* asserts that he fought it with all his might and that the dispute between the Ministers became so heated that, but for the presence of the King, it would have ended 'in a sanguinary manner.' Yet although he declared to Louis XVI that he regarded the decree as 'dangerous for the nation, for the King and for the National Assembly,' he urged him not to withhold his sanction, saying that it would not prevent the gathering of the confederates, and that instead of 20,000 men assembled by law, 40,000 would arrive from the provinces and overthrow the Constitution, the Assembly and the throne. As to the decree against the priests, Dumouriez went on to say: 'Far from saving them by your veto you take from them the help of the law and expose them to massacre.'<sup>2</sup>

But Louis XVI refused to yield to these craven counsels, although deeply distressed by the situation that had arisen; it was the only occasion, Dumouriez said afterwards, when he saw 'that pure and gentle soul' disturbed.

<sup>1</sup> Buchez et Roux, xv. 19-30; *Moniteur*, xii. 632-634.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 270-273.

To add to his distress of mind a most insolent letter was now read aloud by Roland at the Council.

Mme Roland had seen her chance of venting some of the hatred she had long nourished against the King and Queen. Finding the Ministers divided in their opinions and reluctant to insult the monarch who had won their unwilling respect, Manon took up her pen and composed a missive not merely so offensive but so cowardly in its taunts addressed to fallen greatness that her complacent admission of its authorship leaves one breathless. 'I made up the famous letter,' she writes, as if recounting some stroke of genius or deed of valour.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with the words: 'Sire, this letter will remain eternally concealed between you and me,'<sup>2</sup> it went on to taunt the King with the rights and privileges he had voluntarily renounced. 'The present state of France cannot continue for long; it is in a state of crisis of which the violence has reached its height. . . . Your Majesty has enjoyed the great prerogatives that he believed to belong to royalty. Brought up with the idea of retaining them he could not feel any pleasure at seeing them taken from him; the desire to have them given back is as natural as the regret at seeing them done away with. . . . Two important decrees have been drawn up, both of essential interest to public tranquillity and the salvation of the State. The delay in sanctioning them inspires distrust; if prolonged it will cause discontent, and I am forced to say that in the present agitation of all minds, discontent may lead to anything. There is no time to draw back, it is no longer even possible to temporize, the Revolution is made in the minds of the people, it will be finished at the price of blood and will be cemented with blood if wisdom does not prevent misfortunes which it is still possible to avoid. . . . I know that the austere language of truth is rarely welcomed near the throne; I know also that it is because it cannot make itself heard that revolutions become necessary,' etc.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mme Roland, *Mémoires*, i. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Moniteur*, xii. 658.

'The King,' says Dumouriez, 'listened with admirable patience to this impudent diatribe and then said with the greatest sang-froid: "Monsieur Roland, you sent me that letter three days ago, so it was unnecessary to read it to the Council since it was to remain a secret between us two."'

The next morning Dumouriez was called to the Château, where he found the King in his room with the Queen, who said to him: 'Do you think, monsieur, that the King must endure the threats and insolence of Roland or the deceitfulness of Servan and Clavière any longer?'

'No, Madame, I am indignant at it; I admire the patience of the King, and I venture to beg him to dismiss us all six on the spot and choose men who are not supposed to belong to any party.'

'That is not my intention,' said Louis XVI, 'I wish you to remain, as also Lacoste and that good fellow Duranthon. Do me the service to rid me of these three insolent factionaries, for my patience is at an end.'<sup>1</sup>

But Dumouriez could think of nothing better than to urge the King again to sanction the two decrees; failing this he himself would resign. Like all Louis XVI's Ministers, one after another, his only idea was to desert him when matters reached a crisis.

But the King stood his ground, saying: 'That cannot be,' and Dumouriez was just leaving the room when the Queen called him back with the words: 'Think, monsieur, how hard it is for the King to sanction a decree which will bring to Paris 20,000 scoundrels who may murder him.'<sup>2</sup>

To which Dumouriez feebly replied that one must not exaggerate the danger and went on entreating the King to yield. According to Dumouriez the King with great reluctance ended by saying that he would sanction both decrees, but in view of the disparity between Dumouriez's account of his earlier interview with the Queen and the one given by her to Mme Campan, his evidence must be regarded with suspicion. In this case we have only Dumouriez's word for

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 277.

what took place and his principal concern was to justify his subsequent conduct which, even from his own account, appears to have been far from heroic.

On June 13 the three Girondin Ministers, Roland, Servan and Clavière, were dismissed; Dumouriez then remained head of the Council and took the place of Servan as Minister of War.

This step on the part of Louis XVI gave the Girondins a further opportunity to stir up feeling against him. With inconceivable meanness Roland then had his confidential letter to the King, which was 'to remain an eternal secret between them,' read aloud to the Assembly, with the words in which this promise of secrecy was given carefully omitted. As Dumouriez observes, it was a direct attempt 'to provoke assassins and direct all their daggers at the breast of the unfortunate Louis.'<sup>1</sup> Dumouriez himself, entering the hall of the Assembly immediately afterwards, was received with boos and hisses.

But Louis XVI was not intimidated by these demonstrations. On the contrary if, worn down by Dumouriez's persistence, he really had agreed against his better judgement to sanction the two decrees, it was owing to a momentary weakness from which he was not long in recovering. At a meeting of the Council on the following day he told his Ministers firmly that he would not sanction the decree against the priests; whether, as Dumouriez asserts, he agreed at the same time to the camp of 20,000 men is open to question, again we have only Dumouriez's word for it. But on the subject of the priests he was inflexible; never, says Dumouriez, had he 'spoken in so imperative a tone.'

All arguments having failed, Dumouriez attempted to alarm the King by telling him that a rising was being prepared in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, but Louis XVI replied imperturbably: 'Do not think, monsieur, that you will succeed in frightening me by threats; my mind is made up.'

Dumouriez, who himself had been terrified by his recep-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 297.



tion at the Assembly and now found Paris too hot to hold him, then seized the opportunity to resign. His example was followed next day by the other Ministers at a meeting of the Council. Louis XVI gloomily accepted the resignation of Dumouriez but insisted on Lacoste and Duranthon remaining. Four new Ministers were then appointed to a Cabinet that was destined to last three days.

Dumouriez relates that on June 18 he went for the last time to the Château to hand over his accounts to the King and take leave of him before returning to his military career. Louis XVI received him kindly and said:

‘So you are going to join Luckner’s army?’

‘Yes, Sire,’ answered Dumouriez, and undeterred by any sense of shame from expressing his relief at being able to get out of Paris whilst his King remained a prisoner amidst all its horrors, he added: ‘I am delighted to leave this frightful city. I have only one regret; you are in danger.’

Admirably restraining any impulse he may have felt to utter a bitter retort, Louis replied, sighing deeply: ‘Yes, certainly.’

Dumouriez then made a last attempt to shake the King’s determination, imploring him to sanction the two decrees. But Louis XVI replied: ‘Say no more; my mind is made up.’

Dumouriez still persisted, and—according to his own account—reminded the King of his promise to sanction them in private conversation with himself.

‘I was wrong and I repent,’ said Louis XVI.

The King at this moment was seated at his writing-table, Dumouriez standing beside him with his hands clasped. Suddenly Louis XVI put his hands on those of Dumouriez and said with deep sadness:

‘God is my witness that I wish only for the happiness of France.’

‘I do not doubt it, Sire,’ answered Dumouriez with tears in his eyes, but went on to urge the King to sanction the decree against the priests, saying: ‘You think you are saving religion; you are destroying it. The priests will be

massacred, your crown will be taken from you. Perhaps even you, your wife, your children. . . .’ Unable to utter his worst fears Dumouriez, overcome by emotion, stopped short and raised the King’s hand to his lips.

There was a moment’s silence. Louis XVI, whose eyes too had filled with tears, pressed the hand of his Minister.

‘Sire,’ said Dumouriez, ‘if all the French knew you as I do, all our troubles would soon be ended. . . . You have sacrificed yourself since 1789; go on, disorders will cease, the Constitution will be completed, the French will go back to their true character, the rest of your reign will be happy. . . .’

But Louis XVI refused to be led into further concessions, particularly where it was a matter of violating his conscience by sanctioning the persecution of the priests.

‘I am prepared for death,’ he said sadly, ‘and I pardon them beforehand. I am grateful to you for your sensibility, you have served me well. I esteem you; if ever a happier time comes I will give you proof.’

Rising hastily he walked to the end of the room and looked out of the window to hide his emotion. Dumouriez collected his papers and went slowly to the door. The King, hearing it open, turned and said affectionately:

‘Good-bye. Be happy.’<sup>1</sup>

We may question whether even the magnanimity of Louis XVI can have led him to pay quite so undeserved a tribute to the pusillanimous Minister who was leaving him alone to face the situation, but the rest of the conversation is quite in keeping with the character of the King.

Louis XVI has been blamed for not yielding to the entreaties of Dumouriez, but what would this final surrender have availed him? The Jacobins were determined on his death, and as the Queen had said: ‘If one must perish, let it be with honour!’

On June 19, the day after his last interview with Dumouriez, Louis XVI placed his Veto on both decrees.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, ii. 304-307.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TWENTIETH OF JUNE

THE frightful day of June 20, when the mob of Paris marched on the Tuileries, has usually been ascribed to the King's refusal to sanction the two decrees and his dismissal of the three Girondin Ministers. But this is to mistake the pretext for the cause. Bertrand de Molleville, never prone to jump at conclusions, expressed the opinion that these decrees were put forward 'less with the desire to see them sanctioned than with the hope of a refusal' which would lead to an insurrection and further 'the plan formed by the Girondins against the King and monarchy.'<sup>1</sup> The attempt to goad Louis XVI by 'the policy of pin-pricks' into dismissing the three Ministers was part of the same plan. Servan, says Mme Roland, came to me 'with a radiant air' saying: 'Congratulate me, I have been sent away (je suis chassé).' 'I am much piqued,' Manon replied, 'that you should be the first to have that honour, but I hope it will not be long before it is bestowed on my husband.'<sup>2</sup>

The dismissal of Roland, Servan and Clavière thus merely provided a further pretext for the march on the Tuileries that had been planned for weeks beforehand. The date of June 20 had been fixed; it was the anniversary of the Oath of the Tennis Court and also of the flight to Varennes. The first step had been taken by the disbanding of the King's Constitutional Guard with a view to weakening the defences of the Château; the 20,000 confederates were to provide reinforcements for the attack.

I have described elsewhere in detail the preparations made by the leaders and the manner in which the march was organized,<sup>3</sup> suffice it here only to explain that on this

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Mme Roland, *Mémoires*, i. 244.

<sup>3</sup> *The French Revolution*, pp. 211-220.

occasion the Girondins and Orléanistes had combined their forces, the Girondins providing the pretexts and the high-flown oratory which from the benches of the Assembly was calculated to enlist the sympathy of the more educated classes, the Orléanistes supplying the tub-thumpers and professional agitators, who understood how to work on the passions of the mob. All the old hands were there—Santerre, Gonchon, Saint Huruge, Fournier l'Américain, Rotondo, Théroigne de Méricourt—who, from 1789 onwards, had figured in the succeeding tumults of the Revolution. Does not the recurrence of the same agitators tend to show the scarcity of really desperate characters even in the Faubourgs? The factions thus found themselves obliged to employ the same ruffians again and again and even to lend them out to each other.

On this occasion it was the Girondins who borrowed from the Orléanistes. Yet behind the scenes the agents of the Duc d'Orléans were still active. Even the revolutionary journalist Prudhomme admits that: 'here we cannot refuse to see the hidden hand of the Orléanistes who wished to make up in Paris for the *coup manqué* at Versailles [on October 6, 1789] . . . the King was to be assassinated.'<sup>1</sup>

But the people were not admitted to the secret of the plot and the few men, women and children of the working-classes whom Santerre succeeded with difficulty in collecting from the Faubourgs were only told they were to form a procession in order to present a petition to the King and the Legislative Assembly asking for the sanction of the two decrees and the recall of the dismissed Ministers. After this they were to plant a 'tree of liberty' on the terrace of the Tuileries to commemorate the anniversary of the Oath of the Tennis Court, and by way of inducement to the peaceably disposed amongst the people it was suggested how pleasant it would be for them to visit the inside of the Château and see 'Monsieur and Madame Veto' at home.

The King had been warned as early as May 23—that is

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, iv. 38, 43.

to say before the two offending decrees had been passed by the Assembly—that a rising was intended, but for three days before June 20 the danger was said to be imminent. It was now that, deserted by Dumouriez, one of his former Ministers stood by him. Old Malesherbes who, ever since his resignation from the Ministry in 1776, had been living in retreat, was at Lausanne when he heard the King was in danger, and instantly set off for Paris to be near him.<sup>1</sup> To Bertrand de Molleville he said:

‘I am too old to be of any good to him, but I have been tenderly attached to him ever since I was in a position to appreciate his good qualities, and though I cannot endure dressing myself up and, above all, wearing this cursed sword which always gets between my legs when I go upstairs and which perhaps one day will make me break my neck, I go regularly to the *levée* every Sunday, because my greatest pleasure of the week is to see that this good man is well. I never speak to him, but no matter, it is enough for me to see him and I think he is glad to see me.’<sup>2</sup>

It was thus that on June 19 Malesherbes was found at the side of the King who, looking out of the windows at the sun sinking slowly behind the trees of the Tuileries gardens, turned to the faithful old Minister, saying sadly: ‘Who knows whether I shall see the sun set to-morrow?’

Louis XVI was prepared to die. That day he had taken the sacrament and had written to his confessor M. Hébert, Superior of the Eudistes,<sup>3</sup> saying:

‘Come to me; I have never had so much need of your consolation. I have done with men; it is towards Heaven I turn my eyes. Great misfortunes are foretold for to-morrow. I shall have courage.’

The morning of the 20th dawned fine and very hot. As early as five o’clock the city was astir and Santerre had begun

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries de Lundi* (1852), ii. 404.

<sup>2</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, *Mémoires*, ii. 116.

<sup>3</sup> M. Hébert was massacred at the Carmes in the following September.

to muster his forces. But it was not until eleven that the agitators were able to collect enough people for the march which, swelled by vagabonds of all descriptions, had assumed vast proportions. This army, divided into three bands led by Santerre, Saint Huruge and Théroigne de Méricourt, now made its way along the Rue St. Honoré to the hall of the Assembly. Whilst part of the procession were presenting their petition to the Assembly—a proceeding that occupied three hours—a band of marchers broke through the *Porte des Feuillants* and swarmed into the *Tuileries* gardens where, however, they gave evidence of no evil designs and seemed disposed only to rest from heat and fatigue.

About three o'clock they were joined by the rest of the procession which, after leaving the Assembly, poured through the gateway known as the *Porte du Dauphin* into the gardens, and the whole mob, now some 20,000 strong, proceeded to march past the *Château* in the direction of the *Quais* bordering the river.

The King, who had been warned early in the day that riotous assemblies were being formed, was able to watch events from the windows of the *Tuileries*—those of the *Salle du Conseil* overlooking the courtyards of the *Château* and the *Carrousel*, those of M. de *Septeuil*, treasurer of the civil list, commanding a view of the gardens. At the latter Louis XVI, who had remained perfectly calm, stood surrounded by his family, and seeing that the procession showed no intention of invading the *Château*, all breathed a sigh of relief.

The truth was that the marchers—though still shouting their revolutionary slogans 'Long live the *Sans-Culottes*!', 'Down with Monsieur and Madame *Veto*!' and waving the weapons and horrible emblems with which they had been provided—were growing tired; in the course of their demonstration at the Assembly their first frenzy had been spent and they were ready to go home. The leaders, who counted on them to carry out the day's work according to plan, had remained in the background, but Santerre, in-

formed that the whole movement was now likely to prove abortive, hastened to the spot, and addressing his contingent from Saint Antoine, shouted peremptorily: 'Why have you not got into the Château? We *must* get in! it was for that we came here!' Then the mob, instead of proceeding along the quay, obediently turned to the left towards the main entrance of the Tuileries, facing the Carrousel.

The Château, however, was well guarded; on this side a large number of troops were assembled, four battalions of National Guards and two companies of mounted police, together with twenty cannon, guarded the Cour Royale; again, as on the 6th of October, the armed forces were more than adequate to prevent the incursion of the mob. The royal family, knowing this and counting on the fidelity of the National Guards, had remained wrapped, says Montjoie, in too great security. 'It was believed,' Madame Elisabeth wrote afterwards, 'that the necessary precautions had been taken to ward off all danger.' But no one had calculated on the inconceivable inertia of Ramainvilliers, commander of the National Guards, who appears to have been actuated less by cowardice or deliberate treachery than by the fear that the King would condemn any display of force, and allowed the mob to advance and point their cannon against the great gateway of the Cour Royale. Then an unseen hand unlocked the gate and the whole crowd rushed forward through the courtyard towards the main staircase leading to the royal apartments. In vain four officers led by Acloque, a loyal brewer of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, attempted to close the doors; the human tide swept onwards and surged tumultuously into the Château.

The royal family had assembled in the King's bedroom listening to the tumult raging beneath the windows when Acloque rushed in to announce the incursion of the mob. Louis XVI, who showed no trace of fear, instantly decided to go forward and face them, but first insisted that Marie Antoinette, against whom the rage of the populace was particularly directed, should be taken with her children to

a place of safety. Valiantly she refused to leave him, but, being dragged away by force, cried out with streaming eyes to the guards standing around her: 'Frenchmen, my friends, Grenadiers, save the King!' Madame Elisabeth, allowed to remain with her brother, wrote afterwards: 'Luckier than her I found no one to tear me from the King's side,' and clasping his arm she passed with him into the *Œil de Bœuf*.<sup>1</sup>

Two hours earlier, the King, remembering the so-called 'Journée des Poignards' of February 28, 1791, had resolved that this time no provocative action should be attributed to the Court and ordered his entourage to leave him, saying that he would trust to the National Guards for his defence. But in spite of this command a few intrepid defenders had gathered round him, forming an oddly assorted group. Amongst these was the brave old *Maréchal de Noailles Mouchy*, aged seventy-seven, who never left the King's side for a moment throughout this terrible afternoon and paid for his devotion with his head two years later, the *Maréchal de Mailly*, aged eighty-seven, who suffered the same fate, exclaiming with his last breath on the scaffold of the guillotine: 'Vive le Roi! I say it as did my ancestors!' At the other end of the scale of age was *Canolles*, a boy of eighteen, who had belonged to the King's old bodyguard and now flew to his master's side in the hour of danger. There were also the brave brewer *Acloque*, Admiral de *Bougainville*, the celebrated navigator, two of the King's new Ministers, several of his gentlemen, *Joly*, an opera dancer and gunner, and a curious adventuress, *Stéphanie de Bourbon Conti*, claiming to be the natural daughter of the Prince de Conti, who, having borrowed a uniform, a gun, a sword and a sabre, had daily mounted guard over the King and throughout this afternoon never ceased defending him from his assailants.<sup>2</sup>

All these took up their stand around Louis XVI as he

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Stéphanie Louise de Bourbon Conti* (1797), ii. 228.



reached the *Œil de Bœuf*, whilst the savage horde were surging up the staircase of the *Château*. Several grenadiers arriving at this moment, the King called out: 'To me, four grenadiers of the National Guard!' The men sprang to his side and one, realizing that the King's life was in imminent peril, ventured to say to him: 'Sire, do not be afraid.' 'I am not afraid,' answered Louis XVI, 'put your hand on my heart, it is calm and tranquil,' and taking the hand of the grenadier he pressed it firmly to his heart, which indeed at this frightful moment beat as calmly as ever.

Already the mob were battering with their weapons on the locked doors of the *Œil de Bœuf* and howling like a pack of wolves at bay; suddenly beneath their furious blows the lower panels fell inwards revealing a cannon pointed at the King; at the same moment a cluster of pikes was thrust through the aperture. The King's defenders, quickly drawing their swords, threw themselves between him and his assailants, but the King waved them back.

'All defence,' he said, 'is useless, there is only one thing to do, that is to open the door and meet them calmly.' And turning to the Swiss guard Édouard, standing by, he called out loudly: 'Open! I have nothing to fear from Frenchmen!'

The order was obeyed; instantly the savage mob surged forward through the doorway, then suddenly halted, and drew back in surprise. It seems that, overcome with awe at finding themselves suddenly in the presence of the King and with amazement at finding him so different to the monster he had been painted, disarmed too by his air of tranquil benevolence, the first sensation of the crowd was one of stupor. Only one man, swarthy and pock-marked, came forward brandishing a knife-blade tied to a stick, crying furiously: 'Where is he that I may kill him!' But young Canolles, springing forward, forced the man to his knees at the feet of the King and obliged him to call out 'Vive le Roi!'

This courageous action had the effect of further stupe-

fyng the crowd, 'the flood of pikes retreated, as if seized with a kind of terror. There was a moment's silence.'<sup>1</sup> The King's defenders, profiting by this check, drew him into the embrasure of a window, where he took his seat on a sort of platform which raised him above the mob. Madame Elisabeth, who still refused to leave her brother, was placed by grenadiers in a neighbouring embrasure.

From these two points Louis XVI and his sister could survey the whole scene in its full horror. This was no gathering of 'the people,' no demonstration by the working-class, but a collection of the most fearful human beings the civilized world has ever seen.

'If,' Mme de Staël observed, 'some real feeling had animated them, if they had come to protest against injustices, against the dearness of bread, the increase of taxation . . . in a word, against all that power and riches can cause the wretched to suffer, the rags in which they were clothed, their hands blackened with work . . . all this would have excited pity.' But the faces of these people 'were stamped with that physical and moral coarseness for which one could only feel disgust however philanthropical one might be . . . their fearful oaths, their threatening gestures, their murderous weapons, provided an appalling spectacle.'<sup>2</sup>

Here were the dregs, not only of the underworld of Paris, but of foreign countries, negroes, bloodthirsty brigands from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, half naked, crazed with drink and clutching fearful weapons—pikes, scythes, muskets, knives tied to sticks—and carrying hideous trophies of their own devising, a filthy pair of trousers held aloft on a pole—the badge of the *Sans-Culottes*—a calf's heart labelled 'heart of Louis XVI,' miniature gibbets and models of the newly invented instrument, the guillotine, labelled 'Down with Veto and his wife,' a pair of saws tied together on which was written 'For cutting them in two.'

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (1818), ii. 48.

This terrible horde, having recovered from its first surprise, now broke into howls of fury. Amidst the pandemonium the King strove vainly to make his voice heard; only when those standing nearest him and threatening him with their pikes repeated the slogans taught them, demanding his sanction of the two decrees, he said: 'This is neither the time for you to ask, nor for me to accord.' And with regard to the decree against the priests, he added: 'I would rather renounce my crown than submit to such a tyranny over consciences.'<sup>1</sup>

At one moment a drunken man, pushing his way through the crowd, came close to the King holding out a red cap of liberty towards him. According to some accounts Louis XVI voluntarily put this on, but he himself told Bertrand de Molleville afterwards that it was placed on his head by others, and being too small to fit it rested so lightly on his hair that, owing to his preoccupation at the moment, it remained there all the afternoon without his noticing it.<sup>2</sup>

By this time, owing to the heat of the day and the foetid odour of the crowd, the air had become almost unbreathable. Seeing the physical discomfort from which the King was suffering a man in the crowd—according to some accounts a National Guard, according to others one of the insurgents—handed him a bottle of wine, inviting him to drink. 'It is poisoned,' a voice said in his ear. 'Well, then, I will die rather than sanction,' the King replied, and raising the bottle he called out: 'People of Paris, I drink to your health and to that of the French nation!' The revolutionary Prudhomme afterwards declared: 'What saved Louis XVI was his presence of mind in putting on the *bonnet rouge* and in drinking out of a bottle offered him by a real *sans-culotte*.'<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile news had been brought to the Assembly that the King's life was in danger, and a deputation headed by Vergniaud and Isnard was sent to the Château to see what was going on. Although their faction was largely responsible

<sup>1</sup> Beaulieu, iii. 370.

<sup>2</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, ii. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, iv. 43.

for the trouble the two deputies seem to have made some attempt to restore order, but without success. The mob were now in complete control of the situation, and though less sanguinary in their designs than at the outset, had made themselves quite at home, so that the *Œil de Bœuf* presented the appearance of a vast cabaret with men seated at tables drinking and filling the heated air with fumes of foul tobacco. In the embrasure of the window Louis XVI, still with the red cap on his powdered hair, sat calmly surveying the extraordinary scene. When the deputies assured him that 'they would neglect no means for ensuring his liberty,' the King replied gently: 'So you see!' and indicating the pikes, the guns and the cannon by which he was besieged, he turned to a member of the deputation and added with dry humour: 'You who have travelled much, what do you think they would say of us in foreign countries?'<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Pétion had driven up to the Château in his carriage, and arriving in the *Œil de Bœuf* hypocritically approached the King, saying: 'Sire, I have only just heard of the situation in which you have been placed.'

'That is very surprising,' Louis XVI answered curtly, 'since this has been going on for more than three hours.'

'Sire,' said Pétion, 'I was really unaware of any troubles at the Château; as soon as I heard of it, I presented myself before you, but you have nothing to fear, for the people will respect you, we answer for it.'

'I have no fear, as you can see,' Louis XVI replied with dignity, 'the man who has a clear conscience never trembles, it is only those who have something for which to reproach themselves who need to be afraid.' And again taking the hand of a grenadier at his side and placing it against his heart he said: 'See if it beats any faster?' The grenadier, a tailor by profession, named Lalanne, was guillotined two years later for 'having prided himself that on June 20

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, iii. 117.

Capet had taken his hand and holding it to his heart had said: "Feel, my friend, if it is palpitating."<sup>1</sup>

Santerre now led forward his petitioners, repeating the parrot phrases taught them: 'Down with the Veto! Recall the dismissed Ministers! Sanction the two decrees!' One young man advancing close to the King cried threateningly: 'Sire, you are not accustomed to hear the truth, I will tell it you in the name of the people. . . . If you do not sanction the decrees of the Assembly, if you do not abide by the Constitution, we will make you descend from the throne, the reign of tyrants is passed. . . . Sanction the decrees or you will perish!'

To all these cries and menaces Louis XVI replied immovably: 'I have sworn to maintain the Constitution, I shall uphold it at the peril of my life.' And again he repeated: 'If you have any request to make this is not the moment to propose it or for me to accord it.'

Even to Pétion it was now evident that the game was up. The sang-froid and good humour of Louis XVI had triumphed over the passions of the mob. There was nothing to be gained by prolonging the scene. So, mounting on a chair, the mayor addressed the crowd in grandiloquent language:

'People, you have shown yourselves worthy of yourselves. You have preserved all your dignity amidst acute alarms. No excess has sullied your sublime movements. But night approaches. . . . People, withdraw yourselves!'

The crowd, understanding that this was the real signal for retreat, surged towards the doors, but instead of driving them from the Château, the leaders ordered them to file past the Queen, who, in spite of her sister-in-law's efforts to keep her from the scene of action, had endured an ordeal no less terrible than that of the King.

Throughout the whole of that afternoon Madame Elisabeth displayed the most magnificent courage. At the

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire des Individus envoyés à la mort judiciairement*, published by Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, II. 41.

first onrush of the mob she had held on to the King's coat, exclaiming: 'You will massacre me before him!' and, raising her voice, she called out to the raging multitude: 'Respect your King! Respect your King!'

The crowd, mistaking her for the Queen, closed around her shrieking: 'This is the Austrian! We must seize her!' Then the heroic girl, turning towards them, presented her breast to their daggers, saying firmly: 'Here is the Queen!' 'No, no,' cried her retainers, who had gathered round her, 'that is not the Queen, it is Madame Elisabeth.' 'Ah, Messieurs,' she murmured in a low voice, pressing their hands impulsively, 'why undeceive them? Were it not better they shed my blood than that of my sister?'

A fury then held a pike to her throat; a bayonet was pointed at her, close to her heart. 'Be careful, monsieur,' she said, gently turning away the point, 'you might hurt someone with that and I am sure you would be sorry!' The mob, now realizing the mistake they had made, were so astounded at her heroism that 'they seemed ready to fall at her feet in admiration.'<sup>1</sup>

Her one thought was now for the Queen. At all costs she must be prevented from approaching her assassins, but knowing that in the hour of danger Marie Antoinette was sure to fly to the side of her husband, she whispered to her gentlemen: 'Go quickly, messieurs, and prevent my sister coming here; tell her that we do not want her.' Even as Madame Elisabeth had foreseen, the Queen, hearing the tumult from afar, was already on her way to the *Œil de Bœuf* when M. Aubier, sent by Madame Elisabeth, barred her passage. 'Let me pass!' she cried, 'my place is with the King; I wish to join him and perish if necessary in defending him.'

Aubier then explained that it was Madame Elisabeth who had ordered him to prevent her approach.

'Only my most cruel enemies could have given such advice,' Marie Antoinette answered hotly. 'Would you

<sup>1</sup> Le Maire, ii. 228.

dishonour me by preventing me from going to die at my post? I will pass in spite of you, dare you stop me?’

She would indeed have forced her way into the room but her ladies gathered round her—the Princesses de Lamballe and de Tarente, the Marquise de la Roche Aymon—and joined their entreaties to those of Aubier and the Duc de Choiseul, telling her that if the King saw her enter he would certainly descend from his seat to help her and that amidst the sea of pikes he would probably be assassinated. Then the Queen yielded and allowed herself to be led back to her children in the bedroom of the Dauphin.

But, just as on the 6th of October the murderous horde of brigands and sham *poissardes* had been guided to her apartment by ‘someone who knew the way,’ so on this 20th of June the rabble of Paris were led to a door opening into the Dauphin’s bedroom which was barely known even to most of the servants of the Château.<sup>1</sup> This they proceeded to break down with pikes whilst the Queen and her children, driven out of their retreat, fled from room to room for safety. The crowd finding the Dauphin’s room empty, rushed on to the Queen’s bedroom, shrieking: ‘We want the Austrian, dead or alive!’ and after hunting for her vainly under the bed and beneath the mattress, furiously plunged their pikes into the bed-clothes.

It seems to have been at this moment that Marie Antoinette made a further effort to reach the King. When torn away from him at the outset she had continued to repeat: ‘My place is with the King!’ to which Messieurs d’Haussonville and de Choiseul replied: ‘Your place is with your children.’

‘But my sister is serving him as a rampart and I . . .’

‘Listen to your children calling for you!’ said Lajard, one of the King’s Ministers.

And indeed the terror induced in these poor children by the distant roar of the crowd and the sound of breaking doors was such that, hearing their cries, the Queen sent for them

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 304.

and could only calm their fears by holding them in her arms and comforting them with caresses. Then, handing them to her defenders, she tried once more to join the King, and had gone as far as the Salle du Conseil, only two rooms from the *Ceil de Bœuf*, when her way was again barred, this time by a band of insurgents who, on the other side of the door, were in the act of breaking it down. At the suggestion of Lajard, the Queen was led into the embrasure of a window and barricaded by the great Council table. Her children were again brought to her there, her ladies gathered round her; in front stood a double row of brave grenadiers of the *Section des Filles Saint Thomas*, who had been hastily fetched in from the garden to act as a rampart. No sooner had these arrangements been made than the doors of the Salle du Conseil were broken down, and the terrible mob with their pikes and murderous weapons burst into the room howling like wild beasts rushing on their prey. But the sight of the grenadiers intimidated them, and they were obliged to content themselves with filing past the table, mouthing, shrieking insults and uttering threats of death.

Throughout this scene Marie Antoinette sat calmly with her arms around the Dauphin, who had been placed upon the table, with Madame Royale at her side, contemplating the hideous procession with their toy guillotines and gibbets, their bleeding hearts cut from raw meat, 'vomiting, as they passed, a thousand horrors.'

One fury, pausing before the Queen, flung two 'red caps of liberty' upon the table, ordering her in filthy language to put them on herself and the Dauphin. De Wittinghoff, a Livonian Field-Marshal in the service of France, with a trembling hand held one of the caps over the head of the Queen. Then cries went up: 'If you love the nation put the red cap on the head of your son.'

The Queen was obliged to submit to the indignity of seeing the dirty red cap placed on the boy's fair head. Only to one of the friends beside her she murmured in an under-



tone: 'This is too much; it goes beyond all human patience.'

But that strange power which, in their different ways, both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette exercised over the people with whom they were brought in close contact, began to make itself felt. Whilst Louis XVI disarmed his enemies by his good humour and benevolence, Marie Antoinette conquered them by her charm and dignity which had the effect of making them feel ashamed of their violence. The same contrition that had overcome Mirabeau that July morning at Saint-Cloud and Barnave on the return from Varennes now stole into the hearts of the women who, vicious and depraved though they were, retained some lingering spark of compassion.

One girl, a furious revolutionary, had begun by pouring forth imprecations against 'the Austrian,' saying she had caused the unhappiness of France. 'So they have told you,' Marie Antoinette said sadly, 'but you have been deceived. You call me the Austrian, but I am the wife of the King of France, the mother of the Dauphin. In all my feelings as wife and mother I am French. Never again shall I see my own country. I was happy when you loved me.'

Then the fury burst into tears and begged the Queen's forgiveness, saying: 'I did not know you before; now I see that you are very good.'

As they gazed at this beautiful and gracious woman sheltering her children in her arms and returning insults with gentle words; as—in the words of an eye-witness—they looked into her eyes, 'where the sorrow of a mother blended so touchingly with the majesty of a sovereign,' a miracle gradually took place. These ferocious women began to feel pity; several ended by declaring they would shed the last drop of their blood for the Queen and Dauphin. One of the oldest broke into weeping, tearing her hair in a passion of repentance.<sup>1</sup>

Santerre, arriving at this moment, saw with consternation

<sup>1</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, p. 518.

the turn events had taken; turning to one of the sobbing women he said, as if stupefied: 'What is the matter with this woman that she weeps thus? She must be drunk with wine.'

Yet Santerre himself was not lost to all sentiments of humanity. The instrument of a faction rather than a revolutionary by choice, he had come to the Tuileries to carry out the task assigned to him—the assassination of the royal family at the hands of the mob. Already the Orléanistes, on the terrace of the Château, were growing impatient. At one moment their hopes had been raised, for the cry had reached them through the open windows: 'Louis XVI is dead! Long live Philippe!' and voices from the garden answered: 'The deed is done, then? Throw us down the heads!' <sup>1</sup>

But the people driven forward against the King had shrunk from the crime they were intended to perpetrate, and now for a moment even Santerre was disarmed. Resting his elbows on the Council table he looked across at the Dauphin, suffocating in the heated atmosphere beneath the red cap, far too large and heavy for his childish head. 'Take the cap off that child! See how hot he is!' Santerre exclaimed. And the hideous badge of revolution was removed from the boy's fair curls. Santerre, at that moment feeling the hatred for the Queen which the Orléanistes had inspired in him suddenly dispelled, now that he was brought face to face with her, leant across the table saying: 'Ah, Madame, have no fear, I do not wish to harm you; I would rather defend you!' but recovering from his momentary weakness and remembering the part he had to play, he added brutally: 'Remember that it is dangerous to deceive the people.'

At this Marie Antoinette, holding her head high and looking imperiously at Santerre, said:

'It is not by *you*, Monsieur Santerre, that I judge the French people!' and turning to the grenadiers surrounding her, she added: 'It is by these brave men here.'

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, iii. 115.

As she spoke, the Queen was standing upright behind the Council table, and 'her air of majesty, her tone of noble indignation . . . the terrible and celestial fire' that flashed in her eyes, so electrified the grenadiers that they glared at Santerre with a contempt and fury which seemed to threaten his life. The Queen, seeing this, restrained them with a commanding glance and gesture, at the same time pressing the hands of two of the gallant officers with 'those beautiful hands of hers, so worthy to bear the sceptre of the world.'<sup>1</sup> The men, bending down to kiss them, replied only by bedewing them with their tears.'<sup>2</sup>

A great silence fell. At that moment 'Marie Antoinette seemed like an angel in the midst of hell.' Cries of 'Vive la Reine! Vive le Dauphin!' were raised.

It was now eight o'clock in the evening and Santerre, seeing himself beaten, gave the order to retreat. Driving the crowd roughly from the room and down the staircase, he muttered angrily: 'Le coup est manqué.' And as he left the Château at the head of a troop of pikes, he was heard to say: 'The King was difficult to move to-day, but we will come back to-morrow and make him clear out!'

But the crowd had grown weary and seemed ashamed of the part they had been made to play. Poor creatures, all in rags, who had been brought there to assassinate the King, said to each other: 'It would be a pity somehow, he looks like a good sort of fellow (un bon bougre).'<sup>3</sup>

Whilst Santerre was herding his contingent down the staircase, the crowd, in obedience to Pétion's order, were evacuating the Ciel de Bœuf; the two tides meeting streamed out of the Château, leaving it free at last from the invading hordes.

So after four hours of anguish the royal family were again united and fell sobbing with joy and relief into each other's arms. Madame Elisabeth was the first to leave her place;

<sup>1</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, p. 519.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, iv. 43.

seeing there was no further danger for the King, she flew to the Queen and embraced her, the little Dauphin, seizing her hands, kissed them tenderly, then all together made their way to the King's room, and Louis XVI, going towards them, folded them in his arms and pressed his wife and sister to his heart, mingling his tears with theirs, whilst their faithful defenders knelt around weeping with thankfulness at finding them alive after the perils through which they had passed.

Even some of the most intractable deputies standing by were touched by this scene, one, Merlin de Thionville, to the point of tears.

'You weep, Monsieur Merlin,' said the Queen, 'at seeing the King and his family so cruelly treated by a people he has always wished to make happy?'

'It is true, Madame,' answered Merlin, 'that I weep for the misfortunes of a beautiful and feeling woman and the mother of a family; but make no mistake, not one of my tears is for the King or Queen; I hate kings and queens, it is the only feeling they inspire in me, it is my religion.'<sup>1</sup>

And by this insult to a stricken family Merlin felt he had atoned for his momentary weakness.

On this day of June 20, 1792, Louis XVI had shown himself truly heroic. Although on no occasion throughout the whole course of the Revolution had he betrayed the slightest fear for his personal safety, his courage had been of a passive kind, he had faced danger without flinching but also without any vigorous attempt at resistance. On June 20 he had resisted all along the line, and after four hours of threats and insults, confronted by pikes, muskets and murderous weapons of all descriptions, he had still firmly refused to sanction the two decrees.

It may be said that he should have opposed the invasion of the Château by physical force. For it was then that Napoleon Buonaparte, a young sub-lieutenant of artillery, watching the mob marching on the Tuileries, is said to

<sup>1</sup> Campan, p. 332.

have asked why they were not swept away with cannon fire. Yet in the opinion of a royalist writer of the period on this occasion it was non-resistance that saved the situation: 'a single gunshot, one bayonet thrust by a sentinel, and all would have been lost.'<sup>1</sup> At any rate, whether rightly or wrongly, the King preferred a moral victory and he had won it triumphantly. It was his own sang-froid and imperturbable good humour that saved him. For although surrounded by intrepid defenders who warded off the sword and pike thrusts of his assailants, a determined effort on the part of the crowd could easily have overcome all resistance; the attitude of the King alone disarmed them. But the majority of the crowd were not murderously inclined, and like all crowds were readily swayed by the emotions of the moment and impressed by a display of courage. The effect produced by the King even on the bloodier-minded was shown by snatches of conversation between two of the brigands overheard next day in a tavern. 'Yes, we might have been able . . . but when we saw . . . it is so imposing . . . and then we are Frenchmen . . . Sacredieu! if it had been anyone else we could have wrung his neck like a child's . . . but he comes and he says "Here I am! here I am!"'

But if to a crowd purporting to represent the people Louis XVI had shown forbearance, he was not prepared to extend the same indulgence to the instigators of the movement. When Pétion had the impertinence to present himself next day at the Château, the King spoke to him with a severity unprecedented throughout his reign.

'Well, Monsieur le Maire,' Louis XVI opened the interview by saying, 'has peace been restored in the capital?'

'Sire, the people have made their representations to you; they are quiet and satisfied.'

'Admit, sir, that the day of yesterday was a great scandal and that the municipality did not do what it ought to have done to prevent it.'

<sup>1</sup> *Le Maire*, ii. 224.

'Sire, the municipality did all it could and should have done; its conduct will be judged by public opinion.'

'Say by the whole nation.'

Pétion then began to excuse himself saying: 'Without the precautions taken by the municipality more distressing events might have taken place—not against your person.' And fixing his eyes insolently on Marie Antoinette he added: 'You must know, Sire, that *your* person will always be respected.'

At this veiled threat to the Queen, Louis XVI lost his patience and shouted at Pétion: 'Be silent! (*taisez vous!*)' Then he added: 'Is it respecting my person to come before me with arms, to break in my doors and force my guard?'

'Sire, I know the extent of my duties and responsibilities.'

'Do your duty then,' the King said imperiously, 'you are responsible for the tranquillity of Paris.'

'Sire, the municipality——'

'Enough. Go out.'<sup>1</sup>

And Pétion was obliged to withdraw, muttering angrily. But subjugated by this sudden display of the royal authority he published next day a proclamation calling the populace to order and saying: 'Shield the King and Constitution with your arms, surround his person with respect, let his abode be sacred!'

Louis XVI was right in appealing to the opinion of the nation on the events of June 20. The effect of the outrages committed on that day was to bring about a reaction in his favour throughout Paris and to raise a storm of indignation all over France. Nearly all the departments sent protests at the outrages offered to the royal family, the whole country seemed to have risen against the factions.

Louis XVI, however, had no illusions as to the fate reserved for him by the leaders. Immediately after his interview with Pétion on June 21, Bertrand de Molleville came to the Château at nine o'clock in the evening to congratulate the King on the dangers he had escaped, and

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, iii. 420; Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 57.

in the secret conversation he held with him, Louis XVI said:

'All my anxiety was for the Queen and my sister, as for me . . . ' and he stopped short with a gesture of indifference.

'But it seemed to me,' said Bertrand, 'that it was principally against your Majesty this insurrection was directed.'

'I know that very well, I saw quite clearly that they wished to assassinate me and I do not know why they did not do it, but I shall not escape them another day, so I have gained nothing. It does not matter whether I am murdered two months earlier or later.'

'Good God!' cried Bertrand. 'Your Majesty is really so firmly convinced that he will be murdered?'

'Yes, I am sure of it; I have long been expecting it and am accustomed to the idea. Do you think I am afraid of death?'

'No, certainly, but I should like to see your Majesty less decided to await it.' And Bertrand went on to urge the King to show greater energy and make another attempt at escape from Paris.

Louis XVI thought for a moment and then uttered the words that give a clue to his conduct throughout the Revolution.

'If I were alone I would risk another attempt. Ah, if my wife and children were not with me, it would be seen that I am not as weak as people imagine. . . . But what would be *their* fate if I did not succeed?'

'But does his Majesty think that if he is assassinated his family will be more in safety?'

'Yes, I think so. I hope so at least, and if it happened otherwise I should not have to reproach myself with being the cause.'<sup>1</sup>

Even in his gloomiest moments Louis XVI could not seriously believe that the revolutionaries would wreak their vengeance on defenceless women and children. The blood lust of the Reign of Terror was a phenomenon that could

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, ii. 43.

never have presented itself to his imagination. Steeped in the history of Charles I, he saw no further than the scaffold for himself—or perhaps a dagger thrust, a pistol shot, a poisoned bowl that would settle matters still more quickly—after which his wife and family might be set free or at any rate able to make good their escape like Henrietta Maria and her children after the Great Rebellion. Thus death held no fears for him; ‘his misfortunes,’ says Ferrières, ‘had somehow sated him with life.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, iii. 102.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY

MARIE ANTOINETTE was not prepared to accept the prospect of death for Louis XVI in the same spirit of resignation that he himself displayed. After June 20 her letters to Fersen and Mercy become cries for help to save him.

'I still exist but it is a miracle,' she writes to Fersen in cipher and invisible ink. 'The day of the 20th was frightful. It is no longer against me they bear the greatest grudge, it is against the very life of my husband, they no longer disguise it. He showed a firmness and a strength which impressed them for the moment, but the dangers may arise again at any instant. I hope you get news of us. Good-bye. Take care of yourself on our account and do not be anxious about us.' <sup>1</sup>

On July 6 she writes, as if from a third person :

'A terrible catastrophe is expected on the 14th in all corners of Paris and especially at the Jacobins. They preach regicide, there are sinister projects. . . . The Jacobins from all the provinces are arriving here in crowds; there is not a day that the Queen is not warned to be on her guard . . . they do not leave her a moment of peace.' <sup>2</sup>

The Queen only spoke the truth. A further outbreak was anticipated at the Fête de la Fédération on July 14, when the King was again to take his oath to maintain the Constitution on 'the altar of the country.'

So great did the danger of assassination seem to be on this occasion that Mme Campan was ordered by the King's entourage to make him a waistcoat and belt of fifteen layers of thick taffetas to resist a dagger thrust. 'It is to satisfy

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 318.

them that I consent to this,' Louis XVI said in a low voice to Mme Campan, 'but they will not assassinate me, their plan is changed, they will make me die in another way.'

Marie Antoinette, who insisted on being told what he said, answered that she had guessed it; the King had so often repeated to her that all that was happening in France was an imitation of the English Revolution, for he continually studied the history of Charles I. Struck by the same parallel at this moment the Queen for once lost her sangfroid and, bursting into floods of tears, exclaimed: 'I begin to dread a trial for the King; as for me, I am a foreigner and they will assassinate me. What will become of our poor children?'

These were not vain fears, for in this very month a murderer was found creeping stealthily to her bedroom at dead of night and was seized on the threshold by her footman.

When in the morning of July 14 the royal family set forth for the Champ de Mars many people predicted they would never return to the Château, some said the King would be murdered on the steps of the altar, others that he would be separated from the Queen and conveyed to the South of France, where he would meet his death. All through that day Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were obliged to listen to the cries of 'Vive Pétion! Vive d'Orléans! Vive les Sans-Culottes!' For although they had left the Château at eleven o'clock in the morning it was not until six o'clock in the evening that the ceremony took place. Mme de Staël, who was present, wrote afterwards: 'The expression on the Queen's face will never be effaced from my memory, her eyes were drowned in tears; the splendour of her dress, the dignity of her bearing contrasted with the procession by which she was surrounded.' Only a few National Guards separated her from the crowd, and when the King advanced towards the altar insults were hurled at him, pikes threatened him; only the cries of 'Vive le Roi! Vive la

Reine!’ raised by the National Guards around him prevented these outrages from being noticed by the unhappy pair.

‘It needed the character of Louis XVI,’ says Mme de Staël, ‘the character of a martyr, to which he remained true, in order to endure such a situation . . . on other occasions one could have wished him more grandeur but at this moment he had only to remain the same in order to appear sublime. I watched from afar his powdered head in the midst of those heads of black hair; his coat, embroidered as before, stood out amongst the clothes of the people who pressed around him. When he mounted the steps of the altar he seemed to be a holy victim offering himself up voluntarily to sacrifice.’<sup>1</sup>

As the King returned to his place the Queen went down to meet him; he pressed her in his arms with deep emotion, and his children kissed him with tears.

This was the last appearance of the royal family in public. Until the day when the King mounted the scaffold the people were to be collected around him no more.

Although the 14th of July passed off more peacefully than had been expected, the perils of the royal family increased daily, and the arrival of the Marseillais—that horde of brigands from the south sent for by Roland and Barbaroux on the suggestion of Marat—who had been drifting into Paris throughout July and of which the final contingent, 500 strong, arrived on the 30th of that month, added still further to the horror of their position.

Meanwhile Marie Antoinette had been implored to make another attempt at flight. But to the Landgravine of Hesse Darmstadt, who sent her brother to Paris with the object of rescuing the Queen—but the Queen only—she wrote:

‘No, Princess, whilst feeling the full worth of your offers, I cannot accept them. I am vowed for life to my duties and to those dear ones whose misfortunes I share and who,

<sup>1</sup> *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, ii. 54.

whatever may be said, deserve all sympathy for the courage with which they bear their position.' <sup>1</sup>

To Mme de Tourzel she said: 'My mind is made up; I should look upon it as the basest cowardice to abandon the King and my children when they are in danger. Besides, what would life be to me without those so dear to me, who alone can attach me to a life so unhappy as mine. Admit that in my place you would do the same.'

Other plans of escape which included the whole royal family were put before the King and Queen at this time. It was then that Mme de Staël, in collaboration with de Narbonne, formed a project to take them to Normandy, but as d'Allonville observes: 'How could they trust a woman who had so inflamed minds at the beginning of the Revolution?' Nor was it possible to place any more confidence in the former associate of the Duc d'Orléans, the Duc de Liancourt, who proposed to conduct the King and his family to Rouen. Then La Fayette came forward and offered to escort the royal family to Compiègne the day after the Fête de la Fédération, with the help of the old German General Lückner—commanding the French troops near the frontier—and of the National Guards and the Swiss. The King was to drive out of Paris in broad daylight, and in case of resistance La Fayette was prepared to march on the city with his troops. Louis XVI seemed inclined to accept this proposal, but in view of La Fayette's past record Marie Antoinette refused to consider it. It would be better, she said to Mme Campan, to perish than to treat with La Fayette, and indeed the scheme offered a very small chance of success, especially as these negotiations leaked out and the Queen was now publicly accused not only of intriguing with La Fayette, but of making him her lover. 'This atrocious accusation,' says Montjoie, 'hastened the fall of the throne' and was to be brought against her at her trial.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from her lack of confidence in the people who

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 405.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 67.

made these proposals of rescue Marie Antoinette rejected all ideas of flight on the advice of Fersen, who continued to assure her that the only hope lay in action by the Allied Powers.

'Your position,' he wrote to her on June 30, 'fills me with ceaseless anxiety. Your courage will be admired and the firm conduct of the King will make an excellent effect. . . . You must go on in the same way and above all try not to leave Paris. That is the most important point. Then it will be easy to get to you and that is the plan of the Duke of Brunswick. He will have his entry [into France] preceded by a very strong Manifesto in the name of the allied Powers, which will make the whole of France, and Paris in particular, responsible for the persons of the royal family. After that he will march straight on Paris, leaving the combined armies on the frontier,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

Marie Antoinette grasped eagerly at this idea of a Manifesto. Just as she had once believed in the force of opinion expressed by an armed Congress she now imagined that a threat of vengeance would act as a deterrent to the regicidal projects of the Jacobins. Sanguine as ever, she had written to Fersen on July 3 :

'Our position is frightful, but do not be too anxious; I feel courage, and something within me tells me that we shall soon be saved and happy. This one idea supports me.' <sup>2</sup>

Her letter to Mercy on the following day clearly reflects the one she had just received from Fersen :

'All is lost if the factionaries are not checked by the fear of imminent punishment. They want the republic at all costs ; in order to attain it they have resolved to assassinate the King. It is necessary that a Manifesto should make the National Assembly responsible for his life and the lives of his family.' <sup>3</sup>

Fersen was very busy planning this Manifesto in which,

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 315.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 317.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*. ii. 407.

by a deplorable error of judgement, he collaborated with a certain M. de Limon, formerly an ally of the Comte de Provence, later a member of the Orléaniste faction which he declared he had left from principle after the meeting of the States General. Undeterred by these antecedents, Fersen seems to have thought he had made an excellent choice in enlisting the services of this person.

'It was I,' he declared, 'who had the declaration of the Duke of Brunswick made by M. de Limon, the one who was formerly attached to the Duc d'Orléans.'<sup>1</sup> Fersen was delighted with it. 'It is very good,' he wrote to Marie Antoinette on July 18, 'and just what one would wish . . . no undertakings are made and Paris is held responsible for the safety of the King and his family.'<sup>2</sup>

This was all that mattered to Marie Antoinette. 'Tell M. de Mercy,' she wrote in reply on July 24, 'that the lives of the King and Queen are in the greatest danger, that a delay of a day may cause incalculable disasters, that the Manifesto must be sent at once, that it is awaited with extreme impatience, that it will necessarily rally many people round the King and place him in safety, otherwise no one can answer for the next twenty-four hours. The troops of assassins continually increase.'<sup>3</sup>

On July 26 Fersen writes reassuringly to the Queen: 'We have insisted that the Manifesto should be threatening, above all on what concerns the safety of the royal personages, and that there should be no question of Constitution or government.'<sup>4</sup>

At last on July 28 the famous Manifesto was ready and signed—though very reluctantly—by the Duke of Brunswick. On August 3 it was proclaimed in Paris.

According to the terms of this document the Emperor and the King of Prussia declared that their greatest interest was to end the domestic anarchy of France, to arrest the attacks against throne and altar, to give back to the King

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 25 note.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 333.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 336.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 329.

the freedom and safety of which he was deprived. With some diplomacy they expressed their conviction of what was indeed the truth, namely, that 'the healthy portion of the French people abhorred the excesses of a party that enslaved them,' for the protests that had followed on June 20 showed that this portion comprised the vast majority of the population. But this conciliatory overture was followed by a threat. For although declaring that their Majesties have 'no intention of interfering with the internal government of France' and that 'their combined armies will protect all towns and villages which submit to the King of France,' nevertheless those inhabitants who fire on the troops 'will be punished with all the rigour of the laws of war'; further, if the Tuileries are again invaded or the least assault perpetrated against the royal family, 'their Imperial and Royal Majesties will take an exemplary and never-to-be-forgotten vengeance by giving up the town of Paris to military execution and to total subversion, and the guilty rebels to the death they have deserved.'

M. de la Rocheterie deplores the fact that this injudicious Manifesto was substituted for the one prepared by Mallet du Pan which was 'wise and moderate,' but Mallet du Pan's Manifesto was to contain the same warning 'that the city of Paris was to be held responsible for the safety of the royal family and to be destroyed by fire and sword if they were harmed'—a phrase that can hardly be termed wise or moderate—and in the opinion of Mallet du Pan's great-grandson, Sir Bernard Mallet, 'it is more than doubtful whether Mallet's draft, had it been adopted, would have had a different effect.'<sup>1</sup>

The real folly of either Manifesto consisted in uttering a threat to Paris which was calculated to alarm its inhabitants instead of confining reprisals to those guilty of crimes. Had the authors of the proclamation declared that the instigators and ringleaders of a future march on the Tuileries or of any attempt on the lives of the royal family would be the objects

<sup>1</sup> Sir Bernard Mallet, *Mallet du Pan and the French Revolution*, p. 153.

of 'an exemplary and never-to-be-forgotten vengeance,' whilst promising Paris peace and a return to law and order, they would have avoided antagonizing the Parisians and struck terror into the hearts of the Jacobins—in reality arrant cowards—provided they had believed such threats to be really meant.

But here lay the weakness of the whole plan. The Jacobins were not in the least afraid of Brunswick. As the Freemason and Jacobin Carra declared in his *Annales Patriotiques* of July 25: 'Nothing is so foolish as to believe, or to wish to make us believe, that the Prussians desire to destroy the Jacobins. . . . The Duke of Brunswick . . . is the greatest warrior and the greatest politician in Europe . . . if he arrives in Paris, I wager that his first step will be to come to the Jacobins and put on the *bonnet rouge*.'

The initiates knew better than to imagine that the Grand Master of German Freemasonry, the 'Eques a Victoria' of the Stricte Observance, 'Aaron' of the Illuminati, would march against his brethren who had transformed the Lodges from mere debating societies into the centres of action represented by the Jacobin Clubs of France. Not till too late—when the French monarchy had been overthrown and the King and Queen he might have rescued had perished—did the Duke of Brunswick realize the error of his ways and denounce 'the great sect' that had arisen out of Freemasonry in words as burning as Barruel's.<sup>1</sup>

The Manifesto he had signed on July 25, 1792, thus had exactly the contrary effect to that which Fersen intended: it antagonized the population of France but did not intimidate the revolutionaries. It provided, in fact, the very things they needed: a slogan for rallying the people around them by an appeal to patriotism, and a fresh pretext for attacking the monarchy. That this must be its immediate effect seems so obvious that it is impossible not to wonder whether Limon did not play deliberately

<sup>1</sup> See my *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, p. 253.



into the hands of the King's enemies—perhaps in the interests of the Comte de Provence. A year later, on June 26, 1793, Quintin Craufurd, in a letter to Lord Auckland, said that many of the French royalists suspected Limon's loyalty, and Craufurd added: 'I believe he is at the worst but an *intrigant*, who understands *se faufiler* and how to make the most of his talents for his own advantage. I think he is a kind of man from whom a good deal may be learnt and to whom nothing should be confided.' <sup>1</sup>

But Fersen had chosen to confide in him. Nothing is more tragic than the lack of judgement shown by this gallant defender of the royal family. Whilst devoting himself whole-heartedly to their service, ready to risk his life for them at every turn, he was singularly ill-advised in his actions. He had blundered over the flight to Varennes—in exhibiting the berline and in failing to see that the Queen was properly escorted on leaving the Château—and now his mistakes were of a still graver kind. By his co-operation with Limon, his blind confidence in the good faith of the King of Prussia and the intentions of the Duke of Brunswick, his ignorance of Masonic intrigues, he placed the family he would have shed the last drop of his blood to rescue in the most perilous position they had ever occupied. Not till the last moment does he seem to have realized the dangers that would confront them after the proclamation of the Manifesto and still more after the march of Brunswick had begun on July 28. Only then was he stricken with panic, and on that same day wrote to Marie Antoinette:

'This is the critical moment and my soul shudders at it. God preserve you all, that is my only wish. If it was ever of use for you to hide, do not hesitate, I beg you, to do this; it might be necessary in order to give time to reach you. In this case there is a cellar in the Louvre belonging to the apartment of M. de Laporte<sup>2</sup>; I think it is little known and safe. You might make use of it.'

<sup>1</sup> Auckland Papers, British Museum MSS. 34,451, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Intendant of the Civil List guillotined on Aug. 24, 1792.

Now, after having urged the Queen to reject all plans of flight, he wrote on August 3: 'If you could find a safe way of getting out of Paris, do this; let me know if you wish it and perhaps we can find one, that is the important point.'<sup>1</sup>

Again four days later: 'I tremble for this moment and I never cease making wishes. Why cannot I do more?'

And Marie Antoinette? What were her feelings during these agonizing days of suspense? Like Fersen she saw intervention by foreign Powers as the only hope. But now it was no longer an armed Congress she desired and, as the fateful month of August drew near, it was not even a Manifesto, it was the arrival of the allied troops in Paris that she counted on to save the situation.

Why indeed should she not? I have never been able to understand why this fact should have been made a ground of accusation against her on the score of treachery to France. Imagine a family of which one of the sons suddenly goes mad and threatens the rest with a carving knife. Would his father or mother, if powerless to overcome him, be guilty of treachery if they called in a neighbour to the rescue, especially if that neighbour happened to be a near relation? Should they submit to being massacred merely because the assassin was their son?

Such a situation presents an almost exact parallel to that of Marie Antoinette in August 1792. A small but powerful section of the French people had literally become insane, had developed an acute form of homicidal mania which was to express itself later in the mass murders of the Terror, but was now specially directed against the royal family. Because Marie Antoinette owed allegiance to the French as a nation should she have consented to be massacred with all those dear to her by this homicidal faction?

Yet even now it was not she who had called for intervention by force; the initiative had come from abroad. As long as possible she had opposed any violation of the soil of France by foreign troops, and still there was no

<sup>1</sup> Kluckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 342.

question of invasion for the sake of conquest, of annexing territory, of subjugating the population or of committing the ravages common to warfare, but merely of marching to Paris for the purpose of saving the lives and ensuring the liberty, not only of the royal family, but of all that sane portion of the French nation which had fallen under the domination of usurping demagogues. Had this project only succeeded, what seas of blood would have been spared! what vast destruction would have been avoided! No foreign armies could have rivalled the Terrorists in vandalism, or have succeeded as they did in making a cemetery of all France.

The rôle of Marie Antoinette was thus merely to await Brunswick's troops with a beating heart and to give them all the encouragement that lay within her power. Let those writers who blame her, seated comfortably at their desks in peace and security, try to imagine what must have been the nervous tension of this highly strung and sensitive woman who for three years on end had lived in constant peril of her life and of the lives of her family. Ever since the 6th of October 1789 she had lived through perpetual alarms, had never known what it was to sleep safe in her bed at night, and now the danger had come so near that every day, she realized, might be her last. If she prayed to be delivered from this long nightmare by her own countrymen under the leadership of Brunswick, if in imagination she saw with rapture the Austrian troops riding to her rescue through the streets of Paris, sweeping the Tuileries gardens clear of the assassins who daily threatened her, is it surprising? She would have been more than human if she had not longed and prayed for their arrival.

One night, says Mme Campan, the Queen, who could no longer sleep and kept her windows unshuttered to shorten the hours of darkness, watching the moonlight streaming into her room, said that in a month's time she would not look on the moon without being liberated from her chains and seeing the King free. And she went on to say that she

had the itinerary of the Princes and the King of Prussia, that on such and such a day they would be in Verdun and so on.

Would they arrive in time? That was the thought that racked her. Fersen was confident, even to the point of planning the royalist Ministry that was to take office after the Jacobins had been overthrown. To these projects Marie Antoinette, still writing as from a third person, replies on August 1 with a *cri de cœur*:

'The life of the King has evidently long been threatened, as also that of the Queen. The arrival of about 600 Marseillais and a quantity of deputies from all the Jacobin Clubs greatly increases our anxiety, which is only too well founded. Precautions of all kinds are taken for the safety of their Majesties but the assassins continually prowl around the Château. . . . The Marseillais are policing the Palais Royal and the Tuileries gardens which the Assembly has thrown open. In the midst of so many dangers it is difficult to concern oneself with the choice of Ministers. . . . For the moment we can only think of avoiding daggers and of foiling the conspirators who swarm around the throne which is on the point of disappearing. For a long while the factions have taken no trouble to conceal their intentions to annihilate the royal family. In the last two night-sittings they differed only on the means to be employed. You will have been able to judge by a previous letter how urgent it is to gain twenty-four hours; I will only repeat this to-day, adding that if they do not arrive (*si on n'arrive pas*) only Providence can save the King and his family.'<sup>1</sup>

These were the last words Marie Antoinette ever wrote to Fersen. Henceforth no communications could get through from her side though he continued to write to her. In his last letter of August 10, Fersen says: 'My anxiety for you is extreme: I do not know a moment's peace of mind. . . . I regret very much that you did not get out of Paris.'

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, II. 340.

Even as he wrote the Queen had passed beyond the reach of help or comfort; the throne had fallen, the Château was in the hands of the mob.

Marie Antoinette knew that a fresh attack on the Tuileries was impending. Throughout the day of August 9 she remained alone with Madame Elisabeth and her children, seeing no one but Lady Sutherland, the wife of the British Ambassador—the last person she was to receive at the Tuileries. According to one account she spent the day in tears; Madame Elisabeth, on the other hand, seems to have retained her usual buoyancy of spirits, which on this occasion was really amazing; for the last letter she ever wrote is addressed to Mme de Bombelles and dated August 10. Having thus mistaken the date, this extraordinary woman proceeds to write almost jokingly in the language of the people:

‘If you do not think, Mam’selle Bombe, that I am submissive to your orders you are wrong. Have I not just received (*ne v’la’-t-il pas que je reçois*) the letter in which you ask me for news and here I am taking up my pen to tell you that this day of the 10th which was to be so lively and so terrible is as calm as possible. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

At what moment Madame Elisabeth discovered her tragic error is not recorded. But even after that rude awakening she maintained her courage and sat up the whole night with the King and Queen. Louis XVI indeed, ever since the 20th of June, had slept only in his clothes, for he and Marie Antoinette, expecting death at every moment, had taken it in turns to rest, the one sleeping whilst the other remained on guard. This evening only the Dauphin went to bed, and as the Queen kissed him good-night with tears, he said: ‘Maman, why are you weeping? I would rather not leave you this night.’ ‘Be calm, my son,’ answered Marie Antoinette, ‘I shall not be far from you.’

At eleven o’clock Pétion, the mayor, came to the Château

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondance de Madame Elisabeth*, p. 431, given in photostat.

and announced that the city was in a great state of agitation, adding hypocritically that he was going to the Hôtel de Ville in order to allay it.

‘No, monsieur,’ said the Queen, ‘it is under your eyes that everything has been organized. You will, as mayor, sign the order to meet force with force and you will stay beside the King.’

Pétion signed the order but managed to escape from the Château and afterwards boasted that he had done all he could to facilitate the insurrection.<sup>1</sup>

The Château meanwhile was again well guarded. No fewer than sixteen battalions of National Guards, making up a total of 2400 men, were stationed around it, on the terraces on one side and in the courtyards facing the Carrousel on the other. These included the loyal grenadiers of the Filles Saint Thomas, who were ranged in order of battle opposite the main entrance. There was also a body of 1000 cavalry called Gendarmerie à Cheval posted in various places. Moreover, the troops were under the orders of a loyal and resolute commander, the Marquis de Mandat, who had made all necessary plans for defence. Inside the Château were 950 Swiss Guards, whilst all the royalist gentlemen then in Paris to the number of some 200 to 300, led by the gallant old Maréchal de Mailly, had collected in the Palace armed with every weapon on which they could lay their hands.

The royal family therefore at first felt reassured. The Queen and Madame Elisabeth, seated on folding stools, awaited events in the Salle du Conseil surrounded by their ladies, the faithful Princesse de Lamballe, the Princesse de Tarente, the Marquise de Tourzel with her sixteen-year-old daughter Pauline.

Suddenly, at about a quarter to one, the tocsin sounded from all the different churches; everyone moved to the open windows to listen. Then came a lull during which the Queen and Madame Elisabeth, worn out with fatigue,

<sup>1</sup> *Observations de J. Pétion sur la lettre de Robespierre.*

lay down on a sofa to rest. But neither could sleep; in low voices they talked of their position.

At three o'clock the firing of a gun was heard in the courtyards; the Queen started up exclaiming: 'That is the first shot; unhappily it will not be the last. Let us go to the King!'

This time, however, it was a false alarm; calm again followed, the King retired into his bedroom to seek a moment's respite from the anxiety that racked him. The Queen and Madame Elisabeth resumed their vigil in the *Salle du Conseil*.

Before long the dawn began to glimmer, the beginning of a hot and glorious August day. Madame Elisabeth, going to the open window, called out to the Queen, who had remained at the back of the room: 'My sister, come and see the sun rise!' And, looking out, Marie Antoinette saw that the eastern sky was red as blood.

From the distance came the sound of the gathering tumult, like the roar of an angry sea. Suddenly a squadron commander entered and said to the two women: 'This is your last day; the people are the strongest. What carnage there will be!'

'Monsieur,' answered the Queen, 'save the King, save my children!'

And hurrying to the bedside of the Dauphin, she roused him from his sleep. The little prince, kissing her hands fondly, murmured: 'Maman, why should they hurt Papa? He is so good.'

Soon after this the King came out of his bedroom looking like a ghost. He was as pale, says Mme Campan, as if he had ceased to exist. Although he had not gone to bed or changed the violet coat he had worn the day before it was evident that he had tried to rest, leaning his head against an armchair, for his hair, curled and powdered on one side, was flattened and unpowdered on the other, his eyes were red with want of sleep.

Where was the sang-froid that had supported him during

the invasion of the Château, only six weeks earlier? That it had now deserted him everyone realized with pity and at the same time with despair. Yet Louis XVI was no coward; his conduct on July 17, 1789, and on June 20, 1792, had proved that fact; never did he display the least fear for his own safety, and he had long accustomed himself to the thought of meeting a sudden and violent death. This deep dejection seems thus to have been less physical than mental, a recurrence of the nervous breakdown that had overtaken him in the spring of 1791 and again in May 1792, the result of the prolonged strain he had endured for weeks and culminating in this fresh predicament. Always at a loss, when it came to making up his mind on a course of action, he was now called upon to decide whether the Château should be defended at the cost of fearful bloodshed or whether it was advisable to risk a repetition of June 20. On that day the situation had been saved by non-resistance, not a drop of blood had been shed, and although the indignities he and the Queen had suffered were almost unendurable they had had the effect of rallying all France to their cause. Thus the King's final decision this time to offer armed resistance to attack had not been reached without a terrible conflict with his conscience—that conscience which had always forbidden him to shed the blood of the people—and had brought him to a state of mental prostration that paralysed his faculties.

With his hat under his arm and his sword at his side he now made a tour of the defences of the Château accompanied by the Queen, Madame Elisabeth and his children; he appeared on the balcony, where he was greeted with universal applause, and then, alone with a few officers, went out to inspect the troops in the courtyards and gardens of the Château.

It has been said, notably by Barbaroux, who sent for the Marseillais, that if only the King had mounted a horse, if he had ridden amongst them, a commanding presence, 'the very great majority of the National Guards would have



declared for him.' As it was many showed themselves loyal, shouting as he passed: 'Vive le Roi! Vive Louis XVI! Long live the King and the Constitution! We wish for him! We wish for no other! Down with the Jacobins! Down with the factions! Let him place himself at our head and we will defend him to the death.'

Inside the Palace the vaulted ceilings had rung to the cries of: 'Vive le Roi! No, Sire, do not fear a repetition of June 20, we will efface that stain: the last drop of our blood belongs to your Majesty!'

But Louis XVI could find no rousing words with which to cheer them on; only, with tears in his eyes, he repeated several times to those around him: 'Well, I am told they are coming, let them come. I do not know what they want. I shall never separate my cause from that of good citizens. I consent to my friends defending me, but we will escape or perish all together.'

'The Queen,' says Peltier, 'also spoke a few words. She seemed to have difficulty in choking back the sobs that rose in her breast. Her Austrian lip and aquiline nose seemed more pronounced than usual and gave her an indescribable air of majesty.'<sup>1</sup>

She saw clearly that the attitude of the King could only have the effect of damping the loyal soldiers and emboldening the rebels. As he passed through the ranks of the troops stationed on the terrace bordering the river insulting cries arose: 'À bas le Veto! À bas le gros cochon!' Some of the gunners, the most seditious of the National Guards, broke ranks and approached him, shaking their fists in his face.

In the Château two of the Ministers, hearing the tumult that had arisen in the garden, leant out of a window to listen; one, M. Dubouchage, overcome with emotion, exclaimed: 'Good Lord! It is the King they are hooting. What the devil is he doing down there? Let us go and fetch him!'

<sup>1</sup> Peltier, *Récit des événements du 10 août*.

The Queen sat weeping silently; only after a while she said to Mme Campan: 'All is lost. This review has done more harm than good.'

On the King's return to the Château terrible news awaited him. Mandat, commander of the troops, traitorously summoned to the Hôtel de Ville, had been murdered on the steps of that building by an agent of Danton. There was now no one to carry out the plan of defence he had prepared.

But around the King were a number of the gallant gentlemen who had collected overnight in the Château, and it was to six of these he now gave over the command of the interior of the Palace. Under the orders of the Maréchal de Mailly, aged eighty-seven, who had defended the King on the 20th of June, they organized themselves into two companies, led by the Comte de Puységur and the Baron de Vioménil, one taking up its stand before the door of the King's apartment, the other before that of the Queen. Most of them had taken the precaution to arm themselves with swords and pistols, the rest seized on any weapons they could find. Marie Antoinette, seeing that the grenadiers were inclined to resent the presence of this valiant band, turned to them saying: 'Messieurs, our interests are one; all that you hold most dear, your wives, your children, your property, depends on our existence. These generous servitors'—indicating the gentlemen around her—'will share your dangers and will fight with and for you to their last breath.'

The King added a few words to this appeal, uttered with deep feeling by the Queen, whereat all eyes filled with tears and the grenadiers, electrified, joined with the nobles in preparing for defence.

Between seven and eight o'clock a municipal officer arrived in the Salle du Conseil where the royal family were assembled and announced that the deposition of Louis XVI was demanded by the insurgents.

'Then what will become of the King?' asked Marie Antoinette.

The officer maintained a gloomy silence and went out. Louis XVI then retired into his bedroom surrounded by all his family. A moment later Roederer, the attorney-general, appeared at the head of his staff, wearing his scarf of office and asked to see the King. Entering the room he found him seated at a table near the door; the Queen and Madame Elisabeth were between him and the window.

'Sire,' said Roederer, 'the danger is beyond all expression. Defence is impossible. Only a few of the National Guards can be depended on; the rest, intimidated or corrupted, will join up with the assailants at the first clash of arms. Take refuge with the Legislative Assembly,' he added imploringly, 'there is safety for you nowhere else. Leave the Palace, you have not five minutes to lose!'

The Queen had been told earlier that a plan had been made to take the King to the Assembly, and had declared to two of the gentlemen around her that she would rather be nailed to the walls of the Château than take refuge there. Now, seeing the King hesitate, she said to Roederer:

'What, monsieur, are we totally abandoned? But we have forces at our disposal!'

'Madame,' answered Roederer, 'all Paris is on the march. Resistance is impossible. Do you wish to make yourself responsible for the massacre of the King, of your children, of yourself, of the faithful servitors who surround you?'

'God forbid!' said Marie Antoinette. 'Would that I could be the only victim!'<sup>1</sup>

The King, who had remained sunk in thought, raised his head, looked fixedly at Roederer for a moment, then turning to the Queen he said with tears in his eyes: 'Let us go! (Allons! Marchons!)' and rose from his chair. Madame Elisabeth, following him to the door, said to the attorney-general:

'Monsieur Roederer, will you answer for the King's life?'

'Yes, Madame, on my own. I will walk in front of him.' This is Roederer's version of his reply; according to

<sup>1</sup> Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 301.

Dejoly, one of the Ministers present, the Queen 'whose first thought was for the King, the second for her son' then said:

'Monsieur Roederer, gentlemen, will you answer for the person of the King and for that of my son?'

And Roederer only answered gloomily:

'Madame, we will answer for dying at your side; that is all we can promise.'<sup>1</sup>

The royal family and those around them were weeping; the Queen seized the King's hand and raising it to her eyes covered it with tears.

Then the King, turning to his brave defenders, addressed them in these words:

'Messieurs, I beg you to retire and to cease a useless defence. There is nothing more to be done here, either for you or me.'<sup>2</sup>

It was Danton and Pétion who afterwards circulated the lie that 'whilst his oldest courtiers shielded with their bodies the door of his room where they believed him to be' Louis XVI 'fled by a back door with his family to the National Assembly and with complete sang-froid left his satellites in the château to be butchered.'<sup>3</sup> His last words to his defenders given by Mme de Tourzel, who was present, by Mme Campan, by Beaulieu and by Montjoie, effectually refute that calumny.

Louis XVI, says the Foreign Minister, Bigot de Sainte Croix, who walked beside him, crossed, in the sight of a great number of the troops inside the Château, the long suite of his apartments, descended the great staircase of the Palace very slowly, paused in the hall under the eyes of the assembled Guards and in front of two thousand people who saw him pass and who could not fail to spread the news amongst the rest of his defenders.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Récit de Dejoly, given by Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 92-117.

<sup>2</sup> Mme de Tourzel, *Mémoires*, ii. 215.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettre de Danton aux Tribunaux* in Buchez et Roux, xvii. 294; *Observations de Pétion*.

<sup>4</sup> Bigot de Sainte Croix, *Histoire de la Conspiration du 10 août 1792* (1793), p. 53; John Adolphus, *Biographical Memoirs* (1799), i. 314.

Whether he was right in following the advice of Roederer is another question. Croker does not hesitate to stigmatize the attorney-general as an Orléaniste, and Fersen declared that 'under the appearance of devotion he betrayed the King.' But Louis XVI, not unnaturally, concluded that since he and his family were the objects of the insurgents' fury, their departure from the Château would remove all pretext for attack. Secure in this conviction he set forth calmly with Bigot de Sainte Croix; the Queen followed on the arm of M. Dubouchage, Minister for the Navy, and holding one hand of the Dauphin whilst Mme de Tourzel held the other. Then came Madame Elisabeth arm-in-arm with Madame Royale walking with M. Dejoly, and lastly the Princesse de Lamballe with M. d'Abancourt, the Minister of War. On either side was a double row of Swiss Guards and Grenadiers of the Filles Saint Thomas and of the Petits Pères.

It was half-past eight and a glorious summer morning; the sun shone brilliantly on the gay flower-beds and marble statues and sparkled on the sheets of water that lay between the smooth lawns of the garden. As the royal family made their way beneath the shady trees that formed the main alley, did they dream that they were taking part in the funeral procession of the monarchy, that nevermore would they return to the splendid Palace of the Kings, that henceforth they would see the light of the sun only from behind prison walls? It is improbable that even now the whole truth had dawned on them; both the King and Queen appeared to imagine that the plan of taking refuge with the Assembly was only a temporary expedient, and that when the tumult was over and the insurgents had gone home they would return again to the Palace. 'We shall come back,' the King had said to the weeping throng in the Château, and the Queen had repeated with streaming eyes, 'Yes, we shall come back.' But Mme de Tourzel thought that hope was already dead in her heart.

Now, as they walked through the garden the King's face

was firm but stricken with grief, the Queen had dried her eyes and tried in vain to look happy, only the Dauphin was care-free and amused himself kicking at the heaps of dead leaves which had fallen from the chestnut trees overhead, and had been swept by the gardeners into tidy heaps on the pathway.

'How many leaves there are! They are falling early this year,' said Louis XVI sadly, remembering perhaps that a few days before, Manuel had said in his paper that the King would not last until the fall of the leaf.<sup>1</sup>

At the Porte des Feuillants leading to the Assembly, fresh alarms awaited the royal family. A fearful crowd had gathered there, and Roederer having withdrawn the military escort that had accompanied them so far, they seemed for some moments in danger of being torn to pieces. Howls of fury arose: 'Death! Death! We want no more tyrants! Down with Veto!' then apostrophizing the King: 'Send away your priests and your wife! It is she who has brought misfortune to the French!'

'Let your Majesty not be afraid,' said a grenadier at the Queen's side, adding with unconscious irony: 'She is surrounded by good citizens.'

'I am afraid of nothing,' answered Marie Antoinette, pressing her hand to her heart, 'but what will become of my children?'

In the crush her watch and purse were stolen, then a man of enormous height and with a most repulsive countenance seized the Dauphin from her. The Queen gave a cry of terror, but to her relief this horrible personage, who had figured in all the riots and had been loudest in his insults to the King, carried the little boy safely into the Assembly. After a final struggle the whole royal family succeeded in making their way into the hall.

Then Louis XVI, taking his stand beside the President, addressed the Assembly in these words:

'Messieurs, I have come here to prevent a great crime,

<sup>1</sup> P. L. Roederer, *Chronique de Cinquante Jours* (1832), p. 371.

and I think I cannot be more in safety than amidst the representatives of the nation.'

Vergniaud, as President, replied :

'You can count, Sire, on the firmness of the National Assembly, its members have sworn to die defending the rights of the people and constituted authority.'

Their manner of fulfilling this oath had been to sit debating on the African slave traffic, whilst all constituted authority was being destroyed by the raging mob outside.

The royal family were now invited to occupy the box of the reporter for the paper *Le Logographe*. Here they had been seated about two hours when suddenly the air was rent by a fusillade of musketry followed by the roar of cannon. A lying message was brought to the King that the Swiss were massacring the people, and the Assembly, panic-stricken, insinuated by their threatening glances that it was at the order of the King. But Louis XVI had ordered the Swiss not to engage in hostilities, and deceived by the false news brought to him into believing that he had been disobeyed he sent a verbal message through one of his attendants, M. d'Hervilly, commanding them to cease fire. He could not know that the Château had been wantonly attacked and that the Swiss were acting only in self-defence, still less that if they had continued the battle the mob might have been put to flight and the Château saved. Even when Captain Durler, the commander of the Swiss, succeeded in making his way to the Assembly, and begged the King to be allowed to continue the defence, Louis XVI, still convinced that this could lead only to needless bloodshed, answered :

'Lay down your arms, place them in the hands of the National Guards. I do not wish brave men like you to perish.'

Then taking a pen he wrote the fatal order which was carried to the Château :

'The King orders the Swiss to lay down their arms instantly and to retire into their barracks.'

For no other action throughout his whole reign has

Louis XVI been blamed so bitterly as for this. Yet could he dream that in his anxiety to avoid bloodshed he was provoking seas of blood? Could he imagine that in ordering the Swiss to seek a place of safety he was placing them in the greatest danger, that the mob, not content with venting their fury on the Château, would massacre not only the Swiss Guards, men of the people who had remained at their posts, but even the luckless servants in the kitchens of the Palace? The horrors committed on this 10th of August were such as no human mind could possibly have conceived.

Switzerland at any rate did not hold Louis XVI responsible for the butchery that took place. In a Memoir relating to the lion of Lucerne, the monument afterwards erected to the memory of the martyred Swiss Guards, it was expressly stated: 'They would all have fallen victims to their duty if the King had not sent them the order to lay down their arms.'<sup>1</sup>

The action of Louis XVI was thus to save the lives of those few who succeeded in making their escape. If history has judged him hardly, not all posterity concurs with its verdict. The present writer was standing one day in front of the scrap of paper on which the King's order is preserved in the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, when a young working man approached with two girls to whom he read the words aloud:

'Le Roi ordonne aux Suisses de déposer à l'instant leurs armes et de se retirer dans leurs cazernes.'

'Mais alors,' one of the girls said wonderingly, 'le roi était bien bon!'

'Oui,' answered the young man, nodding his head sadly, 'le roi était bien bon.'

Perhaps he had grasped the mind of Louis XVI better than the professor who next approached the glass case leading a band of schoolboys to whom he was doubtless to expound the views of the Sorbonne on the infamies of the monarchy and the benefits that 'the great Revolution' had brought to France.

<sup>1</sup> Barbaroux, *Mémoires* (1822), p. 153.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TEMPLE

THE sufferings of the royal family had only begun when they entered the 'loge du logographe.' For seventeen hours on end—from about nine o'clock in the morning of the 10th until about two o'clock in the morning of the 11th—all through the suffocating heat of the August day, amidst the foetid odour that arose from the Assembly, they were obliged to remain crowded into this box, ten feet square by six feet high, almost without food or drink. During the whole of the time the King had nothing but a glass of lemonade and some biscuit, the Queen a bowl of soup.<sup>1</sup> The Dauphin, worn out with fatigue, lay across her knees and those of Mme de Tourzel, and after a while fell asleep. Marie Antoinette, damp with perspiration, was about to wipe her forehead with her handkerchief, but finding this was soaked with tears, she begged one from the Comte François de la Rochefoucauld who was standing behind her. But his was drenched with blood from the wounds of the Vicomte de Maillé which he had attempted to dress outside the Château.

Added to physical misery was the moral torture of listening to the battle raging outside and the decrees passed by the Assembly, according to which the King was declared to be suspended from his functions, his family were to be kept as hostages and his Ministers dismissed. These proceedings were accompanied by continued insults directed against the King and Queen.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moore, *Journal*, i. 98. Yet a modern French writer has solemnly related that during the course of that day the King ate 300 lbs. of peaches!!! Henri Béraud, *Twelve Portraits of the French Revolution* (English translation), p. 193.

But Marie Antoinette had now recovered her composure and her courage. Whilst the Assembly were plunging a thousand daggers into the heart of Louis XVI, says Montjoie, she seemed not to think at all of herself but only of consoling those around her with smiles, caresses and words of affection.<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Moore, who watched her there next day, wrote afterwards:

‘A person near me remarked that her face indicated rage and the most provoking arrogance. I perceived nothing of that nature; although the turn of the debate, as well as the remarks which were made by some of the members, must have appeared to her highly insolent and provoking. On the whole, her behaviour in this trying situation seemed full of propriety and dignified composure. . . . I am surprised to find that the edge of that rancour which has prevailed in this country against her, seems to be in no degree blunted by her misfortunes.’<sup>2</sup>

It has not been blunted yet, in that or any other country, in this year of 1937!

Two o'clock in the morning brought the royal family release from their cramped position in the reporter's box but no respite from their sufferings. Led into the Convent of the Feuillants at the back of the Assembly, they were lodged for the rest of the night in four cells looking out through narrow windows into courtyards where men drunk with blood and wine had congregated. There they were to hear the whole story of the carnage that had taken place at the Château and the yells of fury still directed against them. ‘But what has she done to them?’ exclaimed Louis XVI, hearing the brigands outside his window calling loudly for the head of the Queen.

All day long for three days on end the royal family were obliged to occupy the wretched box at the Assembly; each night they were taken back to their cells in the old monastery. Mme Campan, who visited the Queen there, found her stretched on her hard and narrow convent bed, shattered

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Moore, *Journal*, i. 64.

with grief. As the Dauphin entered with his sister she said: 'Poor children, is it not cruel to be unable to leave them so fine a heritage and to say: "It ends with us"?'

Such was the destitution of the King and Queen that, having been able to bring nothing with them from the Château, nor any money, the British Ambassadors, Lady Sutherland, hearing of their plight sent them some of her son's clothes for the Dauphin. One of their gentlemen, M. d'Aubier, ventured to offer them 50 louis. 'Keep your pocket books, Messieurs,' said the King, 'you will need them more than we do, for you will, I hope, have longer to live.'

But now these gentlemen were to be taken from them—an order which cut Louis XVI to the heart. 'So I am really in prison, messieurs,' he said. 'Charles I was more fortunate than I am; they left him his friends until the scaffold.'

The Queen added, with tears in her eyes: 'It is only now that we realize the full horror of our position, you alleviated it by your presence and your devotion and they deprive us of this last consolation.'

For the moment a few attendants were left them, and the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme de Tourzel and her daughter were allowed to go with them to the Temple on August 13.

At first the Assembly had proposed to imprison them at the Palace of the Luxembourg, but this choice was overruled by the insurrectional Commune, instituted on August 9, on the pretext that the Luxembourg contained subterranean passages by which the prisoners might escape. But the real reason for the preference given to the Temple may more probably be found in the fact that the Temple had been the home of the Knights Templar suppressed by Philippe le Bel. Had not the Freemasons in the 30th degree of Knights Kadosch sworn to avenge the death of the Grand Master, Jacques du Molay, on the person of the King of France? 'It was not a pure chance,' wrote the Freemason, von Haugwitz, 'that Louis XVI was taken to the Temple, which

he left only to be sacrificed to the shades of du Molay.' <sup>1</sup> The Commune, dominated by the 'adept Hébert' and Chaumette, who, after the manner of the Illuminati of Weishaupt, had adopted the classical pseudonym of Anaxagoras, thus carried out the design of the Congress of Wilhelmsbad according to plan.

Except on this hypothesis the choice of the Temple remains inexplicable, for the Tower was uninhabitable and elaborate structural alterations had to be made in order to adapt it for the purpose required. Situated in the garden of the Palace of the Grand Prior, formerly inhabited by the Prince de Conti, then by the Comte d'Artois, the Tower of the Temple, which was to serve as the King's prison, had remained a relic of the Middle Ages, a tall grim building with narrow windows and stone walls nine feet thick.

Marie Antoinette shuddered when she heard the Temple mentioned, guessing that it was not in the Palace but in this mediaeval dungeon that the royal family were destined to endure their captivity. 'You will see,' she said in a low voice to Mme de Tourzel, 'that they will put us in the Tower, of which they will make a real prison for us. I have always had such a horror of that tower that I asked the Comte d'Artois a thousand times to pull it down; it was certainly a presentiment of all we shall have to suffer there.'

At six o'clock in the evening of the 13th the royal family set forth for the last time in a royal coach from the gate of the Feuillants on their terrible drive to the Temple. Owing to the pressure of the crowd, who overwhelmed them with insults, and the fact that only two horses were employed to draw eleven people besides the postillions and footmen, the journey took no less than two hours and a half. For in the same carriage were not only their ladies but Pétion, Manuel, and a third official who carefully kept their hats on as a sign of disrespect.

The vandalism which characterized the later stages of the Revolution had already begun in Paris; everywhere

<sup>1</sup> N. Deschamps, *Les Sociétés Secrètes*, (1882), iii. 80.

the people were busy pulling down national monuments to the glories of France, the masterpieces of past artists. This rage for destruction was to produce far greater ravages than those of any invading armies; the Tuileries, spared by the Prussians in 1870, and set in flames the following year by the Commune, was to provide the climax to the revolutionary frenzy that began in 1792.

It was thus that on the evening of August 13 the royal family, passing through the Place Vendôme, were brought to a halt before the overthrown statue of Louis XIV which the populace had succeeded in wrenching from its pedestal with considerable difficulty.

‘That, Sire,’ said Manuel, ‘is how the people treat kings.’

Louis XVI, growing red with anger but admirably restraining his feelings, answered drily:

‘It is fortunate, monsieur, when their fury is vented only on inanimate objects.’<sup>1</sup>

It was nearly eight o’clock when the two carriages containing the royal family and their suite arrived at the Temple, which had been illuminated with quantities of small lamps by way of expressing popular joy at their downfall. Santerre was at the door to receive them with several members of the Commune, who all carefully kept their hats on and addressed the King as ‘Monsieur.’

Led at first into the Palace, which was brilliantly lit up and full of people attracted there by curiosity, the King, to whom the Queen does not seem to have confided her presentiments, little dreamt of the fate reserved for them, and, imagining that it was the Palace they were to inhabit, asked to be shown over it, and whilst this was done, apportioned the rooms to his family and their suite. It was not till after supper, an excellent meal which had been spread for them but which no one had the heart to enjoy, that the truth at last dawned on the unhappy prisoners. The Dauphin, who had been growing more and more drowsy, fell asleep whilst a few spoonfuls of soup were put into his

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre de Pauline de Tourzel . . . à la Comtesse de Sainte Algedonde.*

mouth by Mme de Tourzel, who then begged to be allowed to take the little boy to his room and put him to bed. But it was not until eleven o'clock that one of the municipals announced that his room was ready, and taking him in his arms carried him, followed by Mme de Tourzel and one of the waiting-women, to the Tower of the Temple.

Now, as has been said, the dungeon known as the Great Tower of the Temple was uninhabitable and the necessary alterations had not been begun. But attached to it was the Little Tower occupied by the archivist of the Order of Templars, who had arranged it, not uncomfortably, for his own use. It was here that the royal family were to spend the first two months of their captivity whilst the Great Tower was being prepared for them.

But nothing had been made ready for their reception in the Little Tower. The archivist, who had not been told of their arrival, had to be turned out with all his papers at a moment's notice, and since there were only four bedrooms to accommodate fourteen people, they were obliged to crowd in as best they could: a little bed for Madame Royale was placed in her mother's room, Mme de Tourzel, one of the waiting-women, and the Dauphin shared the billiard-room, the Princesse de Lamballe occupied a small dark ante-room, whilst Madame Elisabeth, Pauline de Tourzel and another waiting-woman were lodged in a filthy kitchen next door to the guard-room, where the noise of the turnkeys talking and laughing prevented them from closing their eyes all night. The King, however, slept soundly in a room on the floor above with the valets Hue and Chamilly next door to him. The two other waiting-women were lodged somewhere down below.

Marie Antoinette's heart sank when at one o'clock in the morning the rest of the royal family were led to the grey Tower she had so much dreaded. Finding Mme de Tourzel sitting sadly at the bedside of the Dauphin, she pressed her hand, saying: 'Did I not tell you so?' But it was not till next day that her worst fears were confirmed

and the King was told that the Great Tower, far grimmer than the small one at its side, was to be got ready for them.

Their last friends were now taken from them. In the night of August 19-20, municipal officers arrived saying they were ordered to remove everyone not belonging to the King's family, and the Princesse de Lamballe, with Mme de Tourzel and her daughter, were to be taken away immediately. In vain Marie Antoinette clasped her friends in her arms, in vain all three held her hands and wept over them; the emissaries of the Commune were inexorable. Louis XVI, who had entered on hearing the lamentations of the women, could only look on helplessly, and it was said that as they turned appealingly to him, he answered: 'What can I do?' and indicating the municipal officers, he added: 'They are the masters.'

'Yes,' answered one of them, 'we are, since you have not known how to be one.' <sup>1</sup>

And these were the men who accused the King of tyranny! Thus, in reality, amidst their professed enthusiasm for 'liberty,' what the people really needed was to feel a hand upon the reins. Louis XVI was reminded too late that the first duty of a King is to *rule*, and that his love for his people had blinded him to the necessity for that just severity by which alone he could have retained their respect.

The Princesse de Lamballe, Mme de Tourzel and Pauline were now led away to the prison of La Force. At the same time the whole of the suite were obliged to leave the Temple with the exception of Hue, the Dauphin's valet, who remained until September 2, when he was taken to prison, and Cléry, another of his attendants who had been left behind at the Tuileries and now asked to be allowed to return to him.

Louis XVI felt the loss of Hue deeply; Marie Antoinette, seeing him deprived of all but one of his loyal servitors, shed tears, saying: 'I weep less for myself than for you.'

'Our eyes were not given us to weep with,' answered

<sup>1</sup> Lescure, *Correspondance Secrète*, ii. 618.

Louis XVI, 'but to look up to Heaven, the source of all our consolations and whence we must await them.' <sup>1</sup>

At these words the Queen dried her eyes and faced the situation with the magnificent courage that sustained her to the end. It was now that she entered on the fifth phase of her life. Once a light-hearted child—then a pleasure-loving woman—a mother—a politician—she fulfilled her tragic destiny to the last and became that great figure revered by all the noble minds of posterity—the Queen Martyr. In Marie Antoinette at the Temple, and still more later at the Conciergerie, we see no longer the daughter of Maria Theresa concerning herself with affairs of State; gone are the days of arduous writing in cipher and invisible ink to Fersen, of appealing to the Powers of Europe, the sleepless nights of thinking and planning; that eager mind, that busy brain are at rest, there is nothing now to be done but to await the future with patience and resignation.

At first, while the allied armies were reported to be advancing triumphantly through Champagne towards Paris, there seemed to be still a glimmering hope of rescue. Realizing that the revolutionaries, panic-stricken, might now vent their rage on the royal family, Marie Antoinette said to Hue: 'Everything tells me that I shall soon be separated from the King. I hope that you will remain with him. As a Frenchman, as one of his most faithful servitors, think well over the feelings you should express to him and which I have often shown him. Remind the King, if you can talk to him alone, that impatience to break our chains must never drag from him any sacrifice unworthy of his glory. Above all, no dismemberment of France.' <sup>2</sup>

On September 2 there seemed to be an unusual stir in the city; drums could be heard beating the *générale*. At five o'clock in the evening, when the royal family were collected in the Queen's bedroom, two municipal officers entered, and one, an ex-Capuchin named Mathieu, addressed the King furiously, saying:

<sup>1</sup> Le Riche, ii. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 356.



'Monsieur, you do not know what is going on in Paris, drums are beating, the tocsin is sounding, the cannon is being fired, the émigrés are at Verdun. The people are enraged and will revenge themselves. It was not enough for you to have had our brothers assassinated on the 10th of August, to have used split bullets, of which thousands were picked up in the Tuileries, but now you order a ferocious enemy to march against us threatening to massacre us and butcher our wives and children. Our death has been sworn we know, but before they reach us you shall perish first!'

The object of this tirade seems to have been to terrify Louis XVI into writing a letter asking the King of Prussia to withdraw his troops, and it was afterwards alleged that he had done so. But Hue brings forward convincing evidence to the contrary and relates that Louis XVI replied firmly:

'I have done everything for the happiness of the people; nothing remains to be done.'<sup>1</sup>

The royal family were unaware of the frightful massacres at that moment taking place in Paris on the pretext of the advancing troops, and not until next day did the news reach them in a terrible manner.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. During dinner, which had just ended, the roll of drums and the cries of the populace had been heard. The royal family, alarmed by these sounds, collected in the Queen's bedroom when Cléry entered hastily, white and terror-stricken.

'Why have you not gone to dinner?' asked the Queen.

'Madame,' answered Cléry, 'I am ill.'

Outside, the noise of tumult was increasing; savage imprecations against the Queen could be distinctly heard. A group of men led by a municipal officer then entered the room, and one, in the uniform of a National Guard, armed with a sabre, ordered the royal family to go and look out of

<sup>1</sup> Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 360; Duchesse d'Angoulême, p. 19.



LA PRINCESSE DE LAMBALLE  
*from the Portrait by Duplessis*

*Photo : Bulloz*



the window. 'No,' cried one of his companions, 'do not go there! What a horror!'

An altercation arose; the King asked the reason for the order given.

'Well, Monsieur,' the National Guard answered brutally, 'if you want to know, it is the head of the Lamballe that has been brought you in order to show you how the people avenge themselves on tyrants. I advise you to show yourself if you do not wish the people to come up here!'

And indeed, as Cléry, sick with horror, had seen from the window below, it was the head of 'the good angel,' with her fair hair, still in ringlets, fluttering around the pike head which had been carried here from the prison of La Force by her assassins. Her naked body, terribly mutilated, had been dragged as far as the gates of the Temple and stopped there by the municipal officers, but her heart, torn from it, was held up bleeding on the point of a sabre by one of the band who penetrated inside the precincts.

According to Cléry, Marie Antoinette was spared this ghastly spectacle, for merciful Nature came to her rescue, and at the words of the National Guard she fell into a dead faint, from which her children, weeping, strove to rouse her with tender words and caresses. But Madame Royale afterwards remembered only seeing her mother standing 'frozen with horror.' All night the Queen lay awake sobbing on her bed.

Seventeen days later all hope of rescue for the royal family was ended by the mysterious retreat of the Duke of Brunswick from Valmy on September 20. Quintin Craufurd attributed the whole débâcle to rivalry between the Powers and to 'want of harmony, want of system and want of energy' on their part rather than to 'the irresistible force' of the Republican armies.

'Their successes are due to our want of skill,' he wrote to Lord Auckland two years later. In the opinion of the

émigrés the Emperor and the King of Prussia were 'the best friends in the world,' and he goes on to say:

'I remember a letter from poor Baron de B[reteuil] just after he got to Verdun, wherein, speaking of the King of Prussia, he says: "We shall never be able to show enough gratitude to that good, brave and loyal King, the defender of our rights." But as nothing had been stipulated or defined, the Armies had scarcely entered France when that jealousy between the rival Powers which has never ceased to affect all the subsequent operations could no longer be concealed, and the Prussian Ministers with satisfaction saw their Sovereign and the General of the combined armies, instead of executing the menaces and promises that, but a few weeks before, had been published with ridiculous ostentation, retreating before insurgents, apparently glad to save themselves.' <sup>1</sup>

Lord Auckland, in a letter to Sir Morton Eden on October 19, 1792, declared that it was the King of Prussia who had prevented the engagement (at Valmy) 'for unknown reasons.' <sup>2</sup> By this action Frederick William II had merely pursued his earlier policy of intriguing with the revolutionaries of France. Directly after the Massacres of September Billaud-Varenne had left Paris to negotiate with the Prussians, whom he reached on the 11th; Tallien and Carra followed a little later and ensured the final retreat of the allied armies. D'Allonville thought this was effected by bribery with the sums accruing from the theft of the crown jewels of France by the agents of Danton on September 16, but at the same time pressure of another kind may well have been brought to bear on the high Freemason and Illuminatus by his French brethren. The Duke of Brunswick himself said afterwards: 'Why I retreated will never be known to my death.' <sup>3</sup>

Fersen, who had shared the illusions of the émigrés with

<sup>1</sup> Record Office, *Chatham Papers*, vol. cxxvii, No. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal and Correspondence of Lord Auckland*, II. 456.

<sup>3</sup> Matilda Hawkins, *Memours* (1824), II. 228.

regard to that 'good brave and loyal King,' Frederick William II, now saw what the famous Manifesto he had elaborated with de Limon, to which Brunswick had reluctantly appended his signature, was worth, and his despair knew no bounds.

'My dear friend,' he wrote to Taube, 'in what a century are we living! It seems as if Providence is sparing no blows with which to overwhelm that good and too unhappy family and my soul is rent in a thousand ways.'

Alas! his misguided counsels had contributed in no small degree to the perils of their position in the preceding July.

Yet the retreat of Brunswick did nothing to allay the fury of the revolutionaries. On the contrary, the day after Valmy, on September 21, when the Convention succeeded to the Legislative Assembly, the monarchy was declared to be ended and the Republic proclaimed. At four o'clock on the afternoon of the same day a municipal officer named Lubin, surrounded by mounted police and a number of the populace, arrived beneath the windows of the Tower of the Temple. The trumpets sounded, then after an impressive silence, Lubin in a stentorian voice announced the news to the royal family. Hébert, the terrible 'Père Duchesne,' was seated with them on guard at this moment and now looked across at the King with a leer. But Louis XVI, who was reading, took not the slightest notice and kept his eyes fixed immovably on his book. Marie Antoinette maintained the same attitude of aloofness, not a sign was made by either that could add to the triumph of their jailers.

It was perhaps owing to this impassivity on the part of the King and Queen that the Commune imagined they had not heard the news that the Republic had been established, and on October 7 Manuel, the Procureur Syndic, went to the Temple at the head of a band numbering a dozen men, in order to have the pleasure of announcing it to the King.

When they entered Louis XVI was seated at a small square table, covered with a green cloth, on which were

placed a map, a globe, papers, ink and a small volume of Horace, open at the ode beginning: 'Rectius vives.' According to his daily custom he was in the midst of giving a lesson in geography to the Dauphin, who crept out from between his knees as the officials came into the room and placed himself on a hassock at his father's left side. At the right of the King, the Queen, Madame Royale and Madame Elisabeth were seated in a semicircle doing embroidery.

Manuel opened the conversation by saying: 'Bonjour, Monsieur,' an appellation which he found great satisfaction in substituting for the now proscribed 'Sire.'

'Ah, bonjour, Monsieur Manuel,' the King replied imperturbably. 'How are you?'

'I am fairly well, and you?'

'I am the same.'

'Are you satisfied with the citizens?'

'I have no cause for complaint.'

Manuel then went on to ask other questions, always using the word 'Monsieur,' at which Harmand de la Meuse, who was present, observed that the King controlled an impatient movement and took on 'a singularly imposing air of dignity,' looking fixedly at Manuel; he 'seemed to have risen half a foot in height.'

Finding that he had failed to irritate the King to the point of displaying temper, Manuel said abruptly: 'Well, you are no longer King; we are a Republic.'

'I knew quite well that was your plan,' answered Louis XVI.

Then, after telling the King about the victories of the Republican armies, Manuel said:

'Now that the monarchy is abolished and the Republic is decreed, these decorations'—glancing at the Orders on the King's coat—'are useless and ridiculous.'

At these words, says Harmand de la Meuse, the King, as if struck by a sudden blow, betrayed on his features the most violent grief and indignation; he avoided looking at the Queen, finding it almost beyond his power of

resignation to endure these outrages in her presence, but finally, regaining his composure, he held his hand out to her, saying: 'Lend me your scissors.'

These being given to him, he began to detach the order of the Saint Esprit from his coat but, growing impatient, called Cléry and told him to remove his decorations on the morrow. Then he returned once more to his attitude of 'inconceivable serenity.' After a pause, turning to Manuel with a smile, he said:

'By the way, what has happened to the oath of June 20?'

The King should have said July 7, for he referred evidently to the scene in the Assembly three months earlier, known as the 'Baiser Lamourette,' when after an appeal for unity by Lamourette, Bishop of Lyon, the members of the 'Legislative' had thrown themselves on each other's necks shedding 'torrents of tears,' swearing hatred to the Republic, and vowing to maintain the reigning dynasty.

In answer to this gentle enquiry Manuel could only stammer something about the sovereignty of the people.

The King interrupted him, saying:

'Will you be any happier for it? I hope so, but I doubt it.'

Manuel and his companions then left the Temple overcome with emotion and at the same time almost stunned by the magnanimity of the King. For days Manuel could think of nothing else; meeting Harmand at the door of the Assembly he pressed his hand, saying: 'We did not know that man before.'<sup>1</sup>

So to the last Louis XVI continued to win over those who were brought into close contact with him. Manuel, hitherto cruel and insolent, had, however, been outraged by the murder of the Princesse de Lamballe and had turned violently against its instigator, the Duc d'Orléans. His conversation with the King at the Temple further moderated his revolutionary fervour, and he was now to use his influence in order to save Louis XVI from the scaffold.

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Harmand (de la Meuse), *Anecdotes relatives . . . à la Révolution* (1814), pp. 5-13; Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI, récit de Verdier*, i. 247.



A week before this the King had been moved to the Great Tower of the Temple. The alterations, carried out under the directions of Palloy—a mason employed three years earlier to remove the ruins of the Bastille—had been going on for two months and were now nearly finished. That part of the Palace and the surrounding buildings which abutted on the Tower had been pulled down so as to isolate it completely, and a deep ditch had been dug around it. Then the part of the garden where the prisoners were allowed to walk had been enclosed by a strong wall so high that the sun and air could hardly penetrate, for already the Temple was shut in by surrounding houses in this crowded quarter of Paris.

Inside the Great Tower the large rooms on each storey were divided up into four, immensely thick bars of iron were fixed across the windows, which had been screened by a sort of shutters jutting outwards at the top—known as *soufflets*—which made the dark rooms still gloomier and prevented the prisoners from seeing anything but the sky. The heavy oak doors of the rooms, so low that one had to stoop on going through them, were reinforced with iron and fitted with stronger bolts and bars, those on the narrow corkscrew staircase were of iron, forming six *guichets* with a sentinel at each; these were always kept shut and, in order to pass through, it was necessary to wait for one to open, turning on its hinges with a horrible grating sound, until the last had clanged behind one. A new iron door had been placed at the foot of the staircase, so thick that it required fifty strong men to place it on its hinges. The first of the two doors leading into the King's apartment was also of iron, provided with a strong lock and four bolts; in all eight doors had to be opened in order to reach him. As winter was approaching and most of the rooms were without chimneys, stoves were placed in some of the windows with iron pipes passing through them to get rid of the smoke, which necessitated blocking them completely and consequently increasing the darkness inside.

For six weeks Louis XVI, during his walks in the small garden of the Temple, had watched the building of the living tomb in which he and his family were to be incarcerated. In the morning of September 29 municipal officers arrived at the Little Tower to take away all the prisoners' pens, ink and paper; in the evening after supper they returned again just as the King was leaving the Queen's room to go up to bed, and announced that they had an order from the Commune to remove him to the Great Tower. To the despair of his family he was led away with Cléry to the room which had been destined but not prepared for him, for the workmen were still busy there, and the smell of paint and paste was almost unbearable. As no accommodation had been made for Cléry near the King, the faithful valet spent the night on a chair beside his master's bed.

The next morning the King's usual breakfast—a piece of bread and a jug of lemonade—was brought to him by one of the servants of the Tower; nothing was brought to Cléry, who remained sunk in grief in a corner of the room. He was roused by the King coming to him and saying: 'They seem to have forgotten your breakfast; take this, I have enough,' and the two shared the frugal meal between them.

Cléry, however, was allowed to visit the rest of the royal family that morning and found them all frantic with grief at their separation from the King; 'it was no longer lamentations or tears, it was cries of grief,' says Cléry in his account of the piteous scene.

But finally some of the municipal officers, touched by their despair—and apparently without reference to the Commune—arranged that the royal family should be allowed to have meals together in the King's room of the Great Tower, and it was there that Manuel found them during his memorable interview of October 7. On the 25th of the same month the rest of the family were moved into the rooms prepared for them on the third storey of

the Great Tower. This was reserved for the women, the Queen and Madame Royale occupying one room and Madame Elisabeth another. A folding bed for the Dauphin was put up in the King's room below, whilst Cléry slept close by.

In spite of the gloom produced by the shuttered windows and the grimness of their new prison, the royal family felt happier now that they were reunited. Nothing is more extraordinary than the peaceful way in which they settled down to their life of misery, of perpetual insults and humiliations. Shut off entirely from the outside world, and, except during their short walks in the garden, even from a glimpse of their surroundings, immured behind the iron screens of their windows, they suffered not only from the gloom and confinement of their dungeon, but from the total lack of personal liberty. Not only were they guarded by municipal officers who remained in their rooms by day and at their doors by night, but they were forbidden to speak to each other in voices too low to be heard by their jailers. A whispered word was met by the peremptory order: 'Speak louder!' <sup>1</sup>

At the same time perpetual espionage was exercised over their movements. A municipal officer was liable to come into the bedrooms of the princesses at any moment; one insisted on following the Queen when she wished to change her dress, and she was obliged to give up the attempt. Food was subjected to the most minute examination, loaves of bread, macaroons, even peach-stones were split in two in order to see whether notes were concealed there.

Yet in spite of these vexations the royal family retained their patience and their good humour. 'They were all affable, simple and even gay,' says Verdier, a member of the Commune on duty at the Temple.<sup>2</sup>

The King, as if in no way anxious to shorten the dreary prison day, rose between six and seven o'clock and spent

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI*, récit de Verdier, i. 241.

an hour or more in prayer and reading books of devotion, whilst Cléry dressed the Dauphin. At nine o'clock the whole family now met in the Queen's room for breakfast; then Cléry combed and dressed the ladies' hair and taught Madame Royale how to do her own in case he should be taken from them. Meanwhile the King gave his son his lessons in Latin and geography on a system he had himself devised long before at Versailles where, even in the days of their prosperity, he and the Queen had taken an active part in the education of Madame Royale. It was then that Louis XVI had made a game out of geography lessons by cutting the various divisions of the world out of maps and teaching his pupil how to place them in the right position—a system which was later adopted in all the schools of France.<sup>1</sup> The Queen meanwhile taught Madame Royale to sew and embroider.

At twelve o'clock came the hour of recreation when the children played games or, in fine weather, all went down to walk in the damp and sunless garden, and the Dauphin played at ball with Cléry.

Dinner was at two o'clock, after this the Dauphin amused himself with battledore and shuttlecock or a game called 'siam,' at four o'clock the King took his usual nap, whilst the Queen, Madame Elisabeth and Madame Royale sat round him sewing in silence. At nine o'clock came supper, then the Dauphin, having said his prayers, was put to bed. The King retired, as he had always done, at eleven o'clock; his wife and sister did the same.

The Tower of the Temple held one great consolation for Louis XVI, namely, a fine library, from which he was allowed books and, on the day before his death, he calculated that he had read no less than two hundred and fifty during his imprisonment.<sup>2</sup> Of these his favourites—and also the Queen's—were books of travel, but he never went to bed without having read several pages of Tacitus, Seneca,

<sup>1</sup> P. L. Hanet Cléry, *Mémoires* (1825), i. 84; *Journal de Cléry*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 223.

Horace, Virgil, Terence and so on. This detachment from the horror of his position irritated one of the municipal officers, who observed indignantly that although 'he can only be sure of a fortnight's existence the books he demands would suffice to occupy the longest life.'<sup>1</sup>

The three princesses maintained the same attitude of serenity, going about their daily tasks, careful of their toilettes and of 'that exquisite and recherché cleanliness,' says Montjoie, 'which was a necessity to them,' changing their morning gowns of white dimity for dark flowered linen ones after breakfast, with simple linen caps over their hair.<sup>2</sup>

For by a curious inconsistency the Commune had allowed them to be well supplied with clothes after entering the Temple, where they arrived with only those they stood up in, and according to M. Lenotre no less than thirty dress-makers and milliners, including even the famous Mlle Bertin, were set to work preparing them with an outfit. The King, however, had only two suits, both alike of light maroon silk with gilt buttons, waistcoats of white piqué, black silk breeches, and an overcoat of the pale gold shade still known as 'cheveux de la Reine,' although the Queen's hair had long since begun to turn white. The Dauphin, who usually wore a greyish-green suit with a white frilled shirt open at the neck, was now seven years old and still as charming to look at and as gay as ever.

In the matter of food the prisoners were even better supplied than in that of clothes. A whole staff of cooks and scullions, who had escaped from the Tuileries, had been imported, and three loyal servers from there named Turgy, Chrétien and Marchand, had succeeded in obtaining employment as waiters at the Temple. Meals were thus good and plentiful, according to the custom of the day, but this, as Montjoie observes, was probably owing less to consideration for the royal family than for the thirteen municipal officers

<sup>1</sup> Lenotre, *Le Roi : Louis XVII*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 236; Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI, récit de Moëlle*, i. 257.

who, as well as the servants, were fed on what went down from the royal table. Besides, numbers of 'citizens' were in the habit of coming to the Temple to enjoy good fare. The prisoners themselves were extremely frugal; the King, says Verdier, 'ate with a good appetite, but soberly,' and on this point all witnesses are agreed.<sup>1</sup> Thus at nine o'clock breakfast, a most copious meal, at which coffee and chocolate with cream, barley water, lemonade, rolls, butter, and fruit were served, Louis XVI never sat down, but took only a glass of lemonade and a piece of dry bread standing at the table. Most of the meal went down to be consumed by the staff.<sup>2</sup>

The King's health improved after he entered the Temple. For in spite of the want of exercise the release from continued mental strain seems to have had a salutary effect on his nervous system. Here the haunting fear of invasion by the mob was removed; the sense of responsibility no longer weighed on him. Affairs had been taken out of his hands, and there was now nothing for it but to allow events to take their course. He had grown thinner, but showed no signs of the breakdown that had afflicted him at the Tuileries. Goret, one of the municipal officers on guard during the last eight weeks of his life, wrote afterwards: 'The adage *mens sana in corpore sano* might have been applied to him. He was of the strongest constitution; I never heard him complain of the least indisposition all the time I was near him.'<sup>3</sup>

At one moment, however, before this man's arrival at the Temple, the whole family fell ill in turn. The King caught a bad cold which led to toothache and asked to see his dentist. The apostate priest, Jacques Roux, one of the most atrocious characters of the period, said:

'It is not worth while; before long your teeth will be put right,' indicating the guillotine with a gesture.

<sup>1</sup> Lenotre, *Le Roi : Louis XVII*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Cléry and Moëlle.

<sup>3</sup> Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI*, i. 222.

'Monsieur,' Louis XVI answered gently, 'if you suffered the pain I am feeling you would have pity.'<sup>1</sup>

Next the Dauphin developed fever and the three princesses all caught the malady. Finally Cléry had to take to his bed with rheumatic fever and all the family waited on him, the little Dauphin bringing him drink and Madame Elisabeth administering medicines, which she obtained by pretending they were for herself. One evening, after he was up again and able to return to duty, she wished to give him a box of ipecacuanha lozenges, but owing to the vigilance of the jailers dared not approach him, so bethought herself of leaving it with the Dauphin when the three princesses went to kiss him good-night in his father's room. Cléry was unexpectedly called away and did not return to the King's room until eleven o'clock, when the prince, calling him in a whisper, said: 'Here is the little box my aunt gave me for you and I did not want to go to sleep without giving it to you. It was time you came, for my eyes have closed several times.' Then embracing the faithful Cléry he turned over and in two minutes was fast asleep.<sup>2</sup>

The insolence of some of the men on guard at the Temple was perhaps the hardest thing the royal family had to bear. It has been said that on this point royalist writers have exaggerated, but the revolutionary Prudhomme confirms their evidence:

'The Commune of Paris every day thought out a new system for trying the patience of the prisoners in the Temple. We have several times been witnesses of the fact that those who were on guard at the Tower made a point of singing during the night at the top of their voices the song of Madame Veto. We complained of it at the time in our *Journal des Révolutions* [*Révolutions de Paris*]. They had chosen for turnkey a man with long moustaches, he was a bear with the manners of a tiger, who talked to the prisoners like dogs. . . . One could fill a volume with all the indecent and ironical things

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, v. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 105.

they made it their business to say to the King and his family. The day of his death was only the last of his torment.' <sup>1</sup>

The turnkey here referred to was a man named Rocher of whom all witnesses speak with horror. With his companion Risbey, both wearing bearskin caps and large sabres at their sides, he would stand at each door when the royal family went out for their daily walk in the garden, fumbling with the huge bundle of keys that hung at his belt and purposely keeping them waiting. Then he would place himself beside the last door and blow foul tobacco from the long pipe he kept in his mouth into their faces as they passed through. The disgust this caused the three princesses delighted some of the National Guards, who stood round roaring with laughter at each puff of smoke and making coarse jokes at their expense.

Whilst the royal family walked round the miserable enclosure described as a garden, a number of these same Guards would collect round them dancing and singing revolutionary, and often obscene, songs. On the walls leading to the Tower they had amused themselves writing insults in huge letters: 'We will make Madame Veto dance. . . . We will put the fat pig on a régime. . . . We must strangle the little whelps,' or else they would scrawl up pictures of a gallows or a guillotine with the words underneath: 'Louis spitting into the sack.' <sup>2</sup>

These daily walks in consequence became a torture to the royal family, but for the sake of taking the children into the fresh air both the King and Queen refused to give them up. <sup>3</sup>

One of the most offensive of the men employed at the Temple was the cobbler Simon, who was destined later to become famous, or rather infamous, as the jailer of the Dauphin. This man never missed an opportunity of insulting Louis XVI, referring to him as 'Capet,' the name that had been started at a meeting of the Commune on

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, v. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 60. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.



September 3. 'Cléry,' he would say in the King's hearing, 'ask Capet if he wants anything so that I shall not have the trouble of coming upstairs a second time.'

One day, when he came into the room streaming with perspiration, the Queen said to him kindly: 'You are very hot, Monsieur Simon, will you have a glass of wine?'

'Madam,' answered the cobbler, 'I do not drink like that with everyone.'<sup>1</sup>

We may guess that Marie Antoinette's sense of humour saved her from any feeling of mortification at this ludicrous repartee; but in general she was careful not to lay herself open to insolence. Often by her calm dignity she succeeded in quelling those who insulted her; seldom did she address a word to them, and not a single expression of resentment or impatience was ever recorded against her. On the other hand, to those in whom she detected any spark of humanity or decent feeling, she showed the kindness that was so natural to her. 'Come nearer,' she said to a new municipal officer who was straining his eyes over a book at the back of the room, 'come nearer, monsieur, where we are; you will see better to read.' And she beckoned him to the window near which she was seated with her children.

This man Goret, though a revolutionary, was not without human feeling. 'There,' he relates that he said to himself, 'is a family that I have seen at the height of power, grandeur and honour, shut up in this dark and humble abode, without my being able to show them the least kindness; how happy and honoured I should once have been to pay them my respects!'<sup>2</sup>

Madame Elisabeth, who was playing chess with her brother, seemed to divine his embarrassment and to be amused by it. As if in answer to his thoughts she moved one of the pieces on the board, saying jokingly: 'Come, Mr. King, walk up!'

These schoolgirl spirits, which even now had not deserted

<sup>1</sup> Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI, récit de Verdier*, i. 244.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 211.

the Princess, helped to put Goret at his ease, and the simple friendliness of the King and Queen, who talked to him as they walked round the garden, apparently won his heart, for he seems to have done all he could to alleviate their sufferings.

Others there were amongst the guardians at the Temple who would doubtless have shown them sympathy if they had not been afraid of the Commune, and of the troops on guard outside the Temple.

Now this body, consisting of eight men, later of twenty-five, known as the 'Légion Rosenthal' because it was commanded by a Jew of that name, afterwards took part in the war of La Vendée, where Carrier, unable to muster enough Frenchmen to commit the atrocities he had devised, enlisted companies of alien bandits, one known as the 'American Hussars,' consisting of negroes and mulattos, another the 'Germanic Legion,' composed of deserters and mercenaries from Germany. The Légion Rosenthal formed a third of these 'foreign Legions' at Montreuil Bellay, where, however, it deserted its post, 'taking the rustling of leaves on the trees for the enemy' and escaping at full gallop.<sup>1</sup> Whilst at the Temple a denunciation had been made by several citizens to the Comité de Salut Public of 'the Legion Rosental (sic) partly composed of foreigners'<sup>2</sup>; it is possible, therefore, that the so-called National Guards who insulted the royal family as they walked in the garden of the Temple were, like the guardians of the Russian royal family in 1917, men of an alien race. The parallel between the two situations is at any rate a curious one.

Left to themselves it seems probable that, with the exception of such brutes as Rocher, Risbey and Simon, the Frenchmen on guard inside the prison would not have proved so inhuman. Several indeed secretly showed their sympathy. One of the sentries, says Madame Royale, talked to Madame Elisabeth through the keyhole and did

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Chuquet, *La Légion Germanique* (1904), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Archives Nationales, F<sup>7</sup>, 2486, f<sup>o</sup> 27.

nothing but weep all the time he was at the Temple. Another stationed at the door of the Queen's room begged Cléry to let him have a glimpse of the King, saying: 'I have never seen him, monsieur, and I should like to see him anywhere else but here.'

'Speak low. I will go into the room leaving the door ajar and you will see the King; he is sitting in the window with a book in his hand.'

The sentry peeped in. 'Ah, monsieur,' he said afterwards to Cléry, 'how good the King is, how he loves his children!' And in a voice suffocated with emotion he said, striking himself on the breast: 'No, never can I believe that he has done us so much harm!' <sup>1</sup>

One of the commissaries at the Temple, a young man named Toulan, who had started as a violent revolutionary and had figured in the attack on the Tuileries of August 10, was so touched by the sufferings of the royal family, 'by their magnanimity and gentleness,' that he resolved to do all he could to alleviate their lot, and ended by helping Cléry and Turguy in the secret service they had devised for communicating with the prisoners by means of smuggled notes and signals.

Turguy had invented a system of signs by which, when waiting at table in the presence of the municipal officers, he could convey news of the outside world to the royal family; thus a hand passed over his hair, his eye or his nose would signify an advance of the allied armies, a new decree of the Convention and so on. At the same time, in spite of the vigilance of their jailers, rolls of papers on which communications had been written in lemon juice were substituted by the faithful servitor for the paper stoppers then used for wine-bottles, slipped inside a roll of cotton or inside the stove, so that not a day passed without a note reaching the prisoners.

On December 7 the Commune, apparently overcome with panic that their intended victim might attempt to put

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 62.

an end to his sufferings by suicide, sent orders that the King and his family were to be deprived of all cutting implements. Everything of this kind was now taken from them, a pocket-knife Louis XVI treasured because it had been given him by his father, his razors, a metal rod used for rolling his hair; the princesses were deprived of their scissors and little tools they needed for needlework, Madame Elisabeth, mending the King's coat, was reduced to biting off the end of the thread with her teeth. Louis XVI bore these vexations with sang-froid, only remarking:

‘Do they think me such a coward as to destroy myself?’

It was not long before he heard the reason for these precautions. Cléry's wife brought news of the impending trial of the King, and a day or two later Turgot managed to slip a paper under Cléry's bed which was given to the King to read. It was the decree of the Convention ordaining that on the following Tuesday, December 11, Louis XVI should appear at the bar of the Assembly.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LOUIS XVI BEFORE THE CONVENTION

LONG before the King was brought to the Convention for his so-called 'trial,' a faction in that Assembly had already resolved on his death. At the time of the invasion of the Tuileries the Girondins doubtless hoped to achieve it at the hands of the people, but since the Legislative Assembly had been replaced by the Convention the power had passed into the hands of the two rival factions—the Orléanistes and the Robespierristes who, though divided in their ultimate aims, combined to institute the first stages of the Terror. If, as has been said, the Girondins now wished to save the King, it was mainly because they feared the growing ascendancy of the fiercer elements who formed what was now known as the 'Mountain' of the Convention.

Yet it was the Girondins who had provided the documents on which the accusations against Louis XVI were to be based. For lack of any show of evidence the Convention was deprived of a pretext for the execution of the King; hence presumably the delay that occurred between his imprisonment at the Temple and his summons to the bar of the Assembly. But on November 20 the virtuous Roland came forward to announce a great discovery he had made at the Tuileries.

Many years earlier, in the palmy days at Versailles, when Louis XVI amused himself making locks, he employed as his teacher a young man called François Gamain, to whom he showed great kindness. After the Revolution broke out and the royal family were brought to Paris, Gamain remained at Versailles, still holding the honorary title of 'locksmith to the King.' In May 1791, just before the

flight to Varennes, the King, wishing to find a safe place in which to deposit his private papers, sent for Gamain, in whom he placed full confidence, and ordered him to construct a cupboard in the wall of a passage between two doors of his apartments. This hiding-place, the famous *armoire de fer*, was so cleverly concealed in the woodwork that it escaped detection during the sack of the Tuileries on August 10. On that occasion a certain number of papers containing nothing of importance had been discovered, and the Convention, as has been said, were hard put to it for documentary evidence against the King when, on November 20, Gamain, hoping to ingratiate himself with the revolutionaries, went to Roland and revealed the existence of the *armoire de fer*. The two repaired to the Tuileries together, and Gamain, leading Roland to the spot, lifted a panel of the woodwork which concealed a small iron door. This having been opened, piles of papers were discovered inside. Roland, delighted, called a servant and, ordering him to place the whole collection in a cloth, walked with him through the apartments, and in answer to a deputy who asked him: 'What have you got there?' said triumphantly: 'Good things, which I am going to hand over to the Convention.'<sup>1</sup>

This is Mme Roland's version of what took place, but according to other accounts—notably La Fayette's and also those of Roland's enemies on the 'Mountain'—the papers were not taken straight to the Convention, but were gone through first by Roland in order to remove any evidence compromising to his party.

It seems indeed certain that at various periods the King's Ministers had attempted to buy off the revolutionaries. Bertrand de Molleville relates that Montmorin, through an agent named Durand whom he employed, had paid large sums to Danton for supporting motions at the Jacobin Club, and that towards the end of November 1791, de Lessart made proposals of the same kind to several of the Girondins

<sup>1</sup> Mme Roland, *Mémoires*, ii. 296.

—Brissot, Isnard, Vergniaud and Guadet—who agreed to sell themselves but asked too high a price.<sup>1</sup> Just before the siege of the Tuileries, on August 3, Danton had been given 50,000 écus and the Court thought they could be sure of him. ‘We have no anxiety,’ said Madame Elisabeth, ‘we can count on Danton.’<sup>2</sup> At the same time Pétion and Santerre, on payment of 750,000 livres, had promised to call off the insurrection.<sup>3</sup> The ‘Incorruptible’ himself was not exempt from suspicion; according to both Buzot and Harmand de la Meuse, Robespierre was in treaty with the Court through the Princesse de Lamballe and only left her at midnight on August 9.<sup>4</sup> But this is not corroborated by royalist evidence as in the case of Danton, Pétion and Santerre, who all pocketed the money offered them and betrayed the King.

In view of these intrigues it is easy to understand the nervousness of the revolutionaries with regard to the contents of the *armoire de fer*, and the care with which they appointed a committee to go through the documents and select those that they held could be used in evidence against the King.

But never did the ‘Mountain’ of the Convention labour to bring forth a more ridiculous mouse. This huge collection of papers consisted almost entirely of letters and memoirs written to the King by all sorts of people offering him advice—the sort of thing every politician receives at times of crisis from individuals who imagine they have triumphantly solved the problems that beset him and which his secretary consigns to the waste-paper basket. For some reason Louis XVI had kept these communications, usually without replying to them. ‘Pas répondu’ appears in his handwriting at the head of many. A notable exception to the general futility of these was the letter of Richard Burke quoted earlier in this book.

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, i. 354.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de La Fayette*, iii. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Rocheterie, ii. 418.

<sup>4</sup> Harmand de la Meuse, *Anecdotes*, p. 53; Buzot, *Mémoires* (1823), p. 163.

There were also outlines of speeches the King proposed to make to the Assembly, the letters that had passed between him and Calonne on the non-complicity of England in the troubles of France, and a copy of one from Pitt to this effect; there were the petitions of working-men already quoted, notes showing that Mirabeau had been 'paid to hold his own opinion,' reports from agents of the Court on the payment of writers and speakers, unhappily employed too late to counteract seditious propaganda; there was the correspondence that had passed between the King and the Pope on the question of the civil constitution of the clergy. But nowhere was there a shred of evidence that the King had proved false to the Constitution or had carried on traitorous correspondence with the Powers of Europe. The statement of certain historians that the *armoire de fer* contained proof of his 'guilt' is a pure invention; the documents are all there to be examined, for they were published by the Convention in 1793, and the three volumes, which have now become very rare, lie before me as I write.<sup>1</sup> Jaurès, the Socialist historian, had the honesty to admit that the most incriminating evidence against Louis XVI contained in the *armoire de fer* was that he had continued to pay pensions to his old bodyguard.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was proved that he ceased these payments when they emigrated.

Such then were the 'exhibits' to be produced at the King's 'trial' so as to make out a case against him.

Dr. Moore relates that on December 4—the day after the Convention had decided that the King should be judged by it—he went to hear the report that was to be made on the papers found in the *armoire de fer*, from which 'some very important discoveries were expected,' but they 'proved to be of very little importance.' However, on December 6, the Assembly decreed that the King should be led five days later before the bar of the Convention.

Louis XVI was prepared for the summons, and at nine

<sup>1</sup> See Bibliography under *Armoire de Fer*.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Jaurès, *Histoire Socialiste de la Révolution : La Convention* (1901), ii. 869.



o'clock, when he went up as usual to the Queen's apartment to see his family at breakfast, the roll of drums filled them with anxiety. At eleven, whilst the King was giving the Dauphin a reading lesson, two municipal officers arrived to say that he must be separated from his son.

The King kissed the little boy tenderly, saying: 'Kiss me, my son, and kiss your mother for me,' and ordered him to be taken to the Queen. Then, after pacing the room for a few moments to calm his agitation, he sat down in an armchair by his bed as if stunned by the blow, leaning his head on his hand.

Half an hour later a commissary, puzzled by the long silence, quietly entered the room.

'What do you want?' said the King, looking up.

'I was afraid you were not well.'

'I am obliged to you,' answered Louis XVI with deep sadness in his voice, 'but the way in which my son has been taken from me is infinitely painful to me.'

At one o'clock Chambon, the new mayor of Paris, with Chaumette, Santerre and other officials of the Commune, entered his room and said:

'Louis Capet, I am ordered to announce to you that the Convention awaits you at its bar and to conduct you there at once. Will you come down?'

At this unaccustomed and ridiculous appellation the King showed some irritation. Then he said: 'I could wish my son had been left with me during the last two hours. . . . I will follow you, not in obedience to the Convention, but because my enemies have the upper hand.'

Cléry gave him his hat and helped him into his light-coloured overcoat. Louis XVI descended the stairs. The day was wet and windy; as he entered the carriage waiting at the door, he looked up through the rain at the windows of the Tower as if bidding farewell to all those dear to him whom, at this moment, he believed he might never see again.

The number of troops assembled for his escort appeared to surprise him. He could not know the precautions the

Convention had felt it necessary to take for fear of a popular rising in his favour; 'those who wished his death,' says Dr. Moore, 'were in constant dread of a return of humanity and affection in the hearts of the people towards him.'<sup>1</sup> From eight o'clock in the morning all the outposts had been doubled, the escort of cavalry, infantry and artillery surrounding the King's carriage formed a small army. As he passed along the Boulevards, the Rue des Capucines, and through the Place Vendôme, the Parisians looked on stupefied at the spectacle.

'All the streets which open to the Boulevards,' says Dr. Moore, 'had guards stationed in them, with orders to prevent a multitude assembling, and cannon were placed at the entrance of all those streets. . . . Strong guards were placed at different posts near the Tuileries and Hall of the Assembly. It is said there were near 100,000 men in arms that day in Paris.'<sup>2</sup>

In order to form an idea of the character of the men who were to sit in judgement on the King, it would be necessary to follow the debates that took place beforehand in the Convention, when all vied with each other in hurling the most insane abuse at the head of the monarch. Some extracts from these speeches were given in my *French Revolution* and need not be repeated here, suffice it only to quote the words of Robert, one of the earliest Republicans and editor of the *Mercure National*, who said of Louis XVI:

' . . . he who caused more cruelty than Nero, than Don Pedro; a man, in whose name, by whom and for whom more human beings have been butchered than his life counts hours or moments, I ask you by what right this being should aspire to the absurd privilege of bathing in the blood of his fellow-men. Louis resembles nothing in Nature if it is not his wife, the execrable accomplice of his crimes.'<sup>3</sup>

An English revolutionary named Redhead Yorke, who afterwards repented of his earlier opinions, was seated near the King during his 'trial' and gave a graphic account of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moore, *Journal*, ii. 528.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 507.

<sup>3</sup> Beaulieu, iv. 228.

the scene that took place in the Convention, before Louis XVI entered the hall.<sup>1</sup> Legendre, the butcher, rose to say:

‘Citizen President, I demand that this Assembly preserve the mournful silence of the tomb, so that when the bloody tyrant enters it may strike his guilty soul with horror.’

‘This speech,’ says Yorke, ‘was received with unbounded applause, and the bloodstained Barère, who was President, apostrophized the people on the propriety of observing silence. There were very few people of respectable or even decent appearance in the galleries; they were filled with the vilest rabble.’

Santerre now presented himself at the bar and said:

‘Citizen President, Louis Capet awaits your orders.’

Before Barère had time to reply, Mailhe, one of the secretaries, exclaimed:

‘Bring him in!’

The King entered between the Generals Santerre and Berruyer and advanced with a firm step towards the bar, amidst the silence ordained by the Assembly. His face was calm and even serene; he seemed, says another eye-witness, in no way troubled, but as if he had reserved all his majesty for this moment, showing himself greater than when surrounded by all the ceremonial of the throne.<sup>2</sup>

Divested of his pale overcoat, he stood now ‘dressed in an olive silk coat,’ says Yorke, ‘and looked remarkably well.’ His hair was tied back, curled at the ends and lightly powdered.

Holding his head high he saluted no one, but after a moment turned to scrutinize the Assembly with his short-sighted vision, then raising his eyes to the vaulted ceiling, he appeared to give a start of surprise as he observed the standards hanging there which had been taken from the Austrians and Prussians and from the Swiss massacred on the 10th of August.

Whom did he recognize amongst the deputies of the

<sup>1</sup> Redhead Yorke, *France in 1802* (1906), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, p. 576.

Assembly? Certainly Barère, one-time author of an *Éloge du gouvernement monarchique et de l'amour des Français pour leur roi*, now seated on his presidential throne, in a dark coat and scarlet waistcoat; perhaps the livid face of Robespierre dressed all in black, or Legendre, the brutal butcher, who had insulted him on the 20th of June, wearing an open collar à la Brutus. Yorke, who noted these details, adds: 'The majority of the members looked like blackguards.'

One face the King could not fail to recognize. For straight in front of him, wearing a blue coat and staring at him fixedly through his lorgnette, sat his infamous cousin, the heretofore Duc d'Orléans, now renamed 'Philippe Égalité' by the Commune.

Barère then said: 'Louis, you may sit down.'

The King took his place on the wooden chair provided for him.

Barère now proceeded to read the act of accusation beginning with the words:

'Louis, the French people accuse you of having committed a multitude of crimes in order to establish your tyranny by destroying their liberty.'

Then followed the monstrous list of charges of which a few may serve as examples. Thus it was said:

That on June 20, 1789 he had 'made a criminal attempt on the sovereignty of the people' by suspending their sittings.

(The day of the Oath of the Tennis Court when the halls of all three Orders had been closed so that the one occupied by the Tiers État should be made ready for the Séance Royale.)

That on June 23 of the same year he had 'dictated laws to the nation' and presented royal declarations subversive of all liberty.

(The Séance Royale at which the King had put forward his great scheme of reform.)

That he had 'marched an army against the citizens of Paris.'

(At the time of the siege of the Bastille when Paris was in a state of chaos, but in response to the clamour of the populace the troops had been withdrawn.)

That he had 'eluded' the execution of the decrees of August 4 abolishing servitude and the feudal system.

(Of which he had first given the example by abolishing servitude in his own domains, and he had led the Assembly to a service of thanksgiving for the decrees of August 4.)

That he had called the Régiment de Flandres to Versailles.

(The regiment brought to Versailles before October 5, 1789, at the request of the municipality of the town.)

That he had wished to leave Paris on April 18, in order to go to Saint-Cloud.

(In the spring of 1791 to recover from his illness.)

That before the flight to Varennes he had left a declaration against the articles of the Constitution.

(Which the Constitution itself gave him full power to criticize.)

After this date came wilder charges: the King, whilst a prisoner at the Tuileries deprived of all power, was blamed for the Declaration of Pillnitz—drawn up at the Conference which he had reproached the Comte d' Artois for attending—for the riot on the Champ de Mars on July 17, 1791, for the disorders at Avignon in October of that year, for the state of the army, for 'destroying the navy,' for 'favouring absolute government in the colonies,' finally of course for refusing to sanction the camp of 20,000 men outside Paris before June 20, 1792.

In replying to these accusations Louis XVI, though perhaps too laconic, gave evidence of a clear and logical mind, carefully distinguishing between his actions at a time when he was still an absolute monarch and the period following his acceptance of the Constitution. Bertrand de Molleville gave it as his opinion that 'the cleverest counsel authorized to help Louis XVI with his advice in these critical circumstances would have had difficulty in suggesting replies that would have justified him better than those he

improvised without a moment's hesitation,'<sup>1</sup> and that this was the more remarkable since he had no idea what questions were to be put to him so that he could not prepare his answers beforehand or, being so strictly guarded, ask any advice on the matter.

Only at two moments during this long interrogatory did the King lose his composure. The first was when he was asked whether it was not part of a scheme for 'corrupting public opinion' that—

'You went to the Faubourg Saint Antoine and distributed money to poor workmen, that you told them you could not do more for them. What have you to reply?'

To this the King answered with tears in his eyes: 'I knew no greater pleasure than to give to those who were in want; that had nothing to do with any plot.'

Later on when questioned about the means taken for the defence of the Château on the 10th of August, the most monstrous accusation of all was made:

'You caused the blood of the French to be shed. What have you to say in reply?'

Then the King, who had sacrificed his throne and was ready to sacrifice his life to his horror of bloodshed, raised his voice and said:

'No, monsieur, it was not I who shed their blood—'

This accusation cut him to the heart. Yorke perceived 'a tear trickle down his cheek, but, as if unwilling to give his enemies an opportunity of weakness in his conduct, he instantaneously wiped his face and forehead to denote he was oppressed by heat.'

When the interrogatory had ended Valazé came forward with the papers from the *armoire de fer* which he placed on a small table near the King. Sitting down a little in front of him, but apparently ashamed to look him in the face, Valazé handed each document to him over his shoulder with the words: 'Do you recognize this?'

Louis XVI at once realized the danger not only to himself

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 355.

but to his correspondents of committing himself in this matter. In the dim light of the hall—for Beaulieu asserts that the candles were already lit when the séance began—and with his short-sight he could not be sure of the authenticity of the papers put before him, besides there were so many—the published inventory gives no less than 625—that it was quite impossible for him to remember them all. The King therefore began by demanding that he should be allowed to go through the collection at his leisure, and this request being ignored, he made exceedingly guarded replies, saying in most cases that he did not recognize the document in question rather than compromise anyone who had written to him. For although there was nothing incriminating in the correspondence, the very fact of having written to the King would have placed a man's life in peril at this crisis.<sup>1</sup> Roland's great discovery thus led to nothing.

The interrogatory, moreover, had led to nothing either. Not one bit of evidence had been produced to show that Louis XVI had ever committed an act of tyranny throughout the whole course of his reign, had ever opposed reforms, violated the Constitution or invited foreign invasion. There was literally nothing to go on. Dr. Moore records that 'the King's appearance in the Convention, the dignified resignation of his manner, the admirable promptitude and candour of his answers, made such an evident impression on some of the audience in the galleries, that a determined enemy of Royalty, who had his eye upon them, declared

<sup>1</sup> Lord Acton in his *Essays on the French Revolution*, p. 252, says that after Louis XVI got back to prison he exclaimed: 'They asked questions for which I was so little prepared that I denied my own hand.' This statement is apparently taken from Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, vii. 444, who gave as his authority the 1800 edition of the *Mémoires de Cléry*. But this edition was forged, and the last part of the above sentence was added to what Cléry actually wrote in his genuine *Mémoires* (1823), p. 125: 'J'étais bien éloigné de penser à toutes les questions qui m'ont été faites.' Cléry himself denounced the bogus edition in February 1801. See his letter published in the *Bibliographie de la Révolution*, vol. i. p. 301, by Maurice Tourné, who calls the Journal attributed to him 'one of the most infamous frauds ever registered by bibliography. From the Frontispiece to the last line these *Mémoires* are false . . . they are a bitter satire not only against Louis XVI but against Cléry himself.'

that he was afraid of hearing the cry of *Vive le Roi!* issue from the tribunes; and added, that if the King had remained ten minutes longer in their sight, he was convinced it would have happened: for which reason he was vehemently against his being brought to the bar a second time.’<sup>1</sup>

Moëlle, a municipal officer, who had accompanied the King from the Temple, afterwards declared:

‘Louis XVI was sublime in this discussion. But I perceived that this dignity and talent for which many of the Conventionnels were unprepared, caused them an astonishment which seemed to make them all the more determined to pursue their attack on him.’<sup>2</sup>

Redhead Yorke gives a graphic description of the final scene which, needless to say, does not appear in the official account of the proceedings:

‘Thus far, victory was on the side of the King. Never were charges more completely refuted by a forsaken individual, deprived of the support of friends or counsel.

‘The President was at a loss how to proceed. Barbaroux and several deputies rushed up to his chair and whispered in his ear. This confused him the more. At length Manuel . . . advanced into the area of the hall and in a bungling manner said: “President, the representatives of the people have decreed that none of us shall speak while the King—Louis, I mean—is amongst us. Now I propose that Louis be made to withdraw for a little while so that every member may deliver his opinion.”’

‘No words can give an idea of the silly appearance of Manuel when he found the word “King” had escaped from his lips. At the sound of that name I perceived Legendre, his body writhing and distorted, preparing to bellow. As he was sitting down he gave Bourdon l’Oise a tremendous blow on the ear for calling him to order, which the other returned by a sound blow in the face. Several deputies parted them.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, ii. 529.

<sup>2</sup> Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI, récit de Moëlle*, i. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Redhead Yorke, *France in 1802*, p. 67.



Such were the men who sat in judgement on the King of France. What strikes one most about them is less their brutality than their unspeakable caddishness, shown by their cowardly jeers at fallen greatness. Mme de Staël, writing of their conduct on this occasion, observes:

'When the President of the Convention says to him who was his King: "Louis, you may sit down!" one feels oneself overcome with more indignation than in seeing him accused of crimes he had never committed. One must have sprung from the dust not to be able to respect memories of the past, especially when sanctified by misfortune, and vulgarity combined with crime inspires as much contempt as horror.'<sup>1</sup>

Louis XVI, after asking to be allowed a counsel to defend him, now left the hall. It was five o'clock and he was not only exhausted but faint with hunger. For since, as sometimes happened, he had taken no breakfast and had been hurried to the Convention before his two o'clock dinner, he had had nothing to eat all day. Seeing Chaumette with a roll of bread in his hand he now said: 'I ask you for a piece of your bread,' and the man having consented to share it with him, he ate the crust in the carriage as they drove back together to the Temple.<sup>2</sup>

On arrival there at half-past six the King was led back to his room and found to his grief that he was not to be allowed to see the Dauphin or any of his family.

'But surely my son will spend the night with me since his bed and his things are here?' he asked, seeing that these still remained in his room.

The little boy had, however, been moved up to his mother's room where he slept on a mattress on the floor, and the next day his bed was taken up to him. During the remaining six weeks of his life the King was kept completely separated from his family, who were only able to have news of him through the notes smuggled in to them by Cléry and Turgot.

<sup>1</sup> *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, ii. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Buchez et Roux, xxi. 314.

The same evening of December 11 a deputation from the Convention came to the Temple bringing the decree which authorized him to employ counsels for his defence. Louis XVI chose two lawyers named Target and Tronchet. The former, in a letter signed 'the Republican Target,' refused to act as his defender, whereat the *poissardes*, indignant at his cowardice, went to him with a bundle of birch rods 'in the intention,' says Dr. Moore, 'to insult him in a manner peculiar to themselves. Fortunately for him, he was advertised of their intention and made his escape.'<sup>1</sup> But to Tronchet, who accepted, they carried flowers and laurel wreaths.<sup>2</sup>

It was then that good old Malesherbes once again came forward and offered his services in a courageous letter to the President of the Convention, for he knew no way of communicating directly with the King. 'I do not ask you,' he wrote, 'to inform the Convention of my offer as I am far from thinking myself a personage of sufficient importance for it to concern itself with me, but I was called twice to the councils of him who was my master at a time when that function was the object of everyone's ambition; I owe him the same service now that it is one which many people regard as dangerous.'<sup>3</sup>

Malesherbes' offer was gratefully accepted by the King; on December 14 Tronchet went to the Temple and later in the day Malesherbes arrived. As he entered the room Louis XVI, who was sitting at a small table reading Tacitus, looked up and, seeing the old man, rose and went towards him holding out his arms. Pressing him to his heart he said with tears in his eyes:

'Your sacrifice is all the more generous since in risking your life you will not save mine.'

Malesherbes replied that he was only fulfilling a most sacred duty, and that he hoped by 'defending him victoriously' that he would succeed in saving the King.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, ii. 526.

<sup>2</sup> Vaissière, *Lettres d'Aristocrates*, 571, 581.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 127.

But Louis XVI said: 'I am sure that they will make me perish; they have the power and the will. But no matter, let us concern ourselves with my case as if I were going to win it, and indeed I shall win it in fact, because I shall leave a stainless memory.'<sup>1</sup>

Romain Desèze, chosen by the King in the place of Target, was younger than his two colleagues, being only forty-five, whilst Malesherbes and Tronchet were seventy-two and sixty-seven respectively. A most brilliant lawyer, he now drew up a long speech for the defence, ending with a peroration into which he had put his whole heart. This he read aloud to the King and the other two counsels. 'I have never heard anything more pathetic,' Malesherbes said afterwards, 'we were touched to tears.'

But the King, pressing the hands of Desèze with deep feeling, said: 'That must be suppressed; I do not wish to appeal to their feelings (*je ne veux pas les attendrir*),' and in spite of the supplications of Malesherbes and Tronchet, he went on to say:

'Cut down your peroration, eloquent as it is; it would not be dignified for me to inspire pity for my fate; I wish only for the interest to which the simple statement of my means of justification should give rise. What you cut out, my dear Desèze, would do me less good than it would do you harm.'

Desèze was thus obliged to leave out three-quarters of his peroration.<sup>2</sup>

A few days later Louis XVI said to Malesherbes: 'One thing is troubling me. Desèze and Tronchet owe me nothing, yet they are giving up their time, their work, perhaps their lives for me. How can I reward their services?' For the King now had hardly any money at his disposal.

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes relatives à la mort de Louis XVI* par M. de Vaines, published in the *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet*, II, 361.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet*, II, 35, and *Anecdotes relatives à la mort de Louis XVI* par M. de Vaines, *Ibid.*, p. 360; Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 392.

'Sire,' answered Malesherbes, 'their consciences and posterity will provide their reward. But you can do one thing that will overwhelm them.'

'What is that?'

'Embrace them, Sire.'

The next day Louis XVI pressed them both to his heart and, weeping, they kissed his hands in gratitude.<sup>1</sup>

During his conversations with Malesherbes the King spoke of many things he had at heart, but above all he spoke of the Queen. The injustice of the French towards her, Malesherbes said afterwards, was his cruellest grief. 'If they only knew what she is worth,' he repeated bitterly again and again, 'if they only knew to what height of perfection she has raised herself since our misfortunes began, they would revere and cherish her, but even before then her enemies and mine understood the art of spreading calumnies amongst the people so as to change into hatred that love they bore her for so long.'

And he would go over the story of her life, speaking of the difficulties that beset her at the Court, the false interpretation placed on her most innocent actions, on her friendships, even on her affection for her brother the Emperor. 'Unhappy princess,' he exclaimed, 'my marriage promised her a throne, now what a prospect does it offer her!' And the King pressed the hand of Malesherbes, with tears in his eyes.

Louis XVI well knew the fate that awaited him. One day he asked Malesherbes if he had not seen the white lady wandering around the Temple, and when the old man appeared bewildered at the question, the King said with a smile: 'Ah, do you not know then that according to popular tradition a woman dressed in white wanders around the Palace when a prince of my house is about to die?'

On December 16 a deputation arrived from the Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet*, ii. 35, and *Anecdotes relatives à la mort de Louis XVI* par M. de Vaines, *Ibid.*, p. 360; Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 363.

vention bringing 107 more documents from the *armoire de fer*. These were handed one by one to the King, who replied briefly to the enquiry as to whether he recognized them by a 'Yes' or 'No,' 'I recognize that,' 'I do not,' without further comment. And indeed there was nothing to be said about them, for again they provided no evidence of the least importance, as the list given in the *Moniteur* for December 17 reveals.

On December 26 Louis XVI was to be called for the second time to the bar of the Convention. That he now entertained no hope of his life being saved is evident from the fact that he spent Christmas Day making his last will and testament, that magnificent legacy of his faith left to posterity, of which his enemies cannot dim the glory. Only a few passages can be given here. The beginning is as follows:

'In the name of the Holy Trinity, of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. To-day, the 25th day of December, 1792, I, Louis XVI by name, King of France, having been more than four months imprisoned with my family in the Tower of the Temple in Paris by those who were my subjects and deprived of all communication whatever, even with my family since the 11th of this month . . . having only God as witness to my thoughts and to whom I can address myself, I declare here in His presence my last wishes and feelings.

'I leave my soul to God my Creator and pray Him to receive it in His mercy, not to judge it according to its merits but according to those of our Lord Jesus Christ who offered Himself in sacrifice to God His Father for us men, unworthy though we may be and I the foremost.

'I die in the union of our holy Mother the Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church who holds her powers in unbroken succession from Saint Peter to whom Jesus Christ confided them. . . .

'I pray God to forgive me all my sins; I have endeavoured scrupulously to recognize them, to detest them and to humiliate myself in His presence.'

Then came the one matter that weighed heavily on his conscience, his forced sanction to the civil constitution of the clergy:

‘I pray God to receive the confession I have made and above all my deep repentance for having placed my name (though against my will) to acts which may be contrary to the discipline and belief of the Catholic Church. . . .’

Later on he passed on to the subject of his family.

‘I commend to God my wife and children, my sister, my aunts, my brothers and all those who are bound to me by ties of blood. . . . I pray God particularly to look in mercy on my wife, my children and my sister who have long shared my sufferings, to uphold them with His grace if they come to lose me as long as they remain in this perishable world.

‘I commend my children to my wife; I have never doubted her maternal tenderness for them, I recommend her above all to make of them good Christians and upright people, to make them regard the grandeurs of this world (if they are condemned to endure them) as dangerous and perishable possessions and to turn their eyes towards the only solid and lasting glory of eternity. . . .

‘. . . I beg my wife to forgive me all the ills she suffers on my account and the grief I may have caused her in the course of our union, just as she can be sure that I hold nothing against her if she thought she had anything wherewith to reproach herself.

‘. . . I recommend my son, should he ever have the misfortune to become King, to realize that he must give himself up entirely to the welfare of his fellow-citizens; that he must forget all hatreds and resentments, notably those relating to the griefs and misfortunes that I am enduring.’

The King went on to express his gratitude to all those who had remained attached to him, to recommend them, as also his advisers and his attendants Cléry, Hue and Chamilly,<sup>1</sup> to the care of his son, and then said:

‘I end by declaring before God, and ready to appear

<sup>1</sup> Chamilly was guillotined on June 23, 1794.

before Him, that I reproach myself with none of the crimes brought against me.'

This done, he set forth next morning with perfect tranquillity of mind for the Convention under the guard of Santerre and the mayor Chambon, quietly discussing Latin authors with them in the carriage. On arrival he was met by Malesherbes, Tronchet and Desèze and, during the twenty minutes he was kept waiting in the room opening out of the hall of the Assembly, walked up and down with them talking. Treilhard, a member of the Convention, entering suddenly and hearing them address him as 'Sire' and 'Your Majesty,' asked furiously: 'What has made you so bold as to use names here that the Convention has forbidden?'

'Contempt for you and contempt for life!' answered Malesherbes with superb courage.<sup>1</sup>

The King now took his place at the bar surrounded by his counsels; then Desèze embarked on his speech for the defence.

This lengthy dissertation, which took over two hours to read, is described by contemporaries as a model of eloquence and forensic skill. Taking each accusation in turn, Desèze ably refuted it, providing a complete justification of the King's conduct on every occasion, but unfortunately in language too academic to appeal to any but legal minds. There were plenty of these in the Convention but they were already made up and no arguments Desèze or any other advocate could use would change them; they knew, as well as he did, the baselessness of the charges brought against the King and needed no convincing on that point. Desèze, in treating them as honest judges ready to consider evidence, not only misinterpreted the character of his audience but invested them with an importance and authority to which they had no right and were utterly unfitted to bear. In reality the only chance for the King lay in enlisting the sympathy of the tribunes occupied by

<sup>1</sup> Hue, *Dernières Années . . . de Louis XVI*, p. 417.

the public, which were not to be roused by cold logic, but only by an appeal to their emotions. For the hearts of many of the people were still with the King, and even the rabble that filled these same tribunes were not entirely insensible. Montjoie records that during the King's first appearance at the Convention one of the women, known later as *tricoteuses*, who had been brought there to insult him, suddenly burst into tears, exclaiming: 'Mon Dieu, how he makes me weep!'

If, then, Desèze had only contented himself with a shorter speech, reminding the people in simple words of all Louis XVI had done for them since his accession, describing, as Louis Blanc the Socialist did long afterwards, how he had fed them from his own kitchen, how he had cared for them during those hard winters of 1784 and 1788, and shown them how cruelly he had been maligned, it is possible that the tribunes might have risen in his defence as Dr. Moore declared they had been on the point of doing a fortnight earlier. A popular movement of this kind alone could have broken the power of the 'Mountain.'

But—perhaps out of deference to the King's expressed desire: 'Je ne veux pas les attendre!'—Desèze in the main avoided any emotional appeal; only on two occasions he rose to flights of oratory that could be readily understood by the people. These were when he said, casting his eyes in astonishment around the Assembly: 'I look amongst you for judges and I find only accusers!'—a phrase that created a great sensation throughout the hall—and when at the end he summed up the infamous injustice shown to the King in the words:

'You reproach him for the blood that has been shed. You wish that this blood should cry for vengeance against him! . . .

'Against him—who at that time (the 10th of August) came to the Assembly in order to prevent its being shed!

'Against him—who in his whole life never gave a sanguinary order.



‘Against him—who on the 6th of October at Versailles prevented his own guards defending him.

‘Against him—who at Varennes preferred to be brought back captive rather than cause the death of a single man.

‘Against him—who on the 20th of June refused all the help offered him and wished to remain alone amongst his people!

‘You impute to him the blood that has been shed!

‘It is him you accuse!

‘Frenchmen, what has become of that national character, that character which distinguished you in the past, that character of greatness and of loyalty?’

When Desèze had ended, the King rose to his feet and said in a firm voice:

‘Citizens, my means of defence have been put before you; I will not go over them again. In speaking to you perhaps for the last time, I declare that I have nothing with which to reproach myself and that my defenders have only told you the truth. Never had I feared that my conduct should be publicly examined, but my heart is rent to find in the act of accusation the imputation of having wished to shed the blood of the people and above all that the misfortunes of the 10th of August should be attributed to me. I admit that it seemed to me that the continued proofs I had given at every time of my love for the people should have spared me this reproach—I who would have risked my life to save their blood!—and that no such imputation should ever come near me.’<sup>1</sup>

After these words, the last he was to be allowed to speak in public, Louis XVI left the hall with his counsels. His first thought was to express concern at the exhaustion from which Desèze appeared to be suffering after his long oratorical effort. Then, entering the carriage to return to the Temple, he displayed the same calm and serenity as on the drive to the Convention. At one moment he observed that Chambon was holding in his hand a snuff-box with a

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, xiv. 847-848.

charming portrait on the lid and enquired whether it was that of Chambon's wife. The mayor, handing him the box to look at, replied that it was, and a municipal officer present added that she was better than that.

'You are fortunate, Monsieur, to possess even better than the portrait,' the King said, returning the box to its owner.

It was five o'clock when Louis XVI re-entered the Temple, where his family had spent the day in anguish. On the morrow a copy of Desèze's speech was smuggled in to the Queen, but after reading it with close attention she evidently realized that there was no longer any hope and wrote at the top the words in Latin: 'Oportet unum mori pro populo.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MURDER OF THE KING

THE days passed slowly at the Temple during the succeeding fortnight whilst the Convention continued to debate daily on the fate of the King. As soon as he had left the hall on December 26 a deputy named Duhem rose to demand that he should be judged on the spot without his defence being considered.<sup>1</sup> At this Lanjuinais, a Breton and a member from Ille-et-Vilaine belonging to no party, whom Croker describes as 'the bravest and honestest man that the Revolution produced,' uttered an eloquent remonstrance.

'It is evident,' he said, 'that you have been made judges which you have no right to be. To-day you are asked to pronounce [judgement] without even having the time to examine the defence. . . . You have constituted yourselves judges of Louis XVI. Well, it is on this point that I reply to the atrocious proposal that has been made.'

Lanjuinais was perfectly right in saying the Convention had no power to judge the King—an important point that has been overlooked by nearly all historians. For in the Constitution of 1791, which had never been abrogated—and which Louis XVI was accused of violating—Article 1 of the section headed 'Judicial Powers' distinctly stated that:

'Judicial power cannot in any case be exercised by the Legislative body or the King.'

According to Article 9:

'In a criminal matter no citizen can be judged except on an accusation received by juries, or decreed by the

<sup>1</sup> For debate of December 26, see *Moniteur*, xiv. 848; Buchez et Roux, xxii. 59.

Legislative body in those cases where its function is to follow up the accusation. After the accusation has been made, the fact shall be admitted and declared by juries. . . . The law shall be applied by judges.'

As the Convention was not composed of judges it had therefore no right to pass judgement on the King, and in arrogating to itself the powers of a tribunal it violated the Constitution and played an illegal part.

When, amidst angry murmurs, Lanjuinais went on to ask that Louis XVI should be judged according to the law and that all 'those salutary forms reserved for all citizens without exception should be applied in his case,' a tumult arose and shouts went up on all sides demanding that Lanjuinais should be imprisoned in the Abbaye. In this pandemonium Lanjuinais strove vainly to make his voice heard, but the President, Defermon, a fellow-deputy from Ille-et-Vilaine, who showed great firmness and courage on this occasion, imposed silence, and he was able to go on:

'I continue my argument and I say: you cannot remain judges of a disarmed man, of whom several amongst you have been the direct and personal enemies. . . . You cannot remain judges, applicers of the law, accusers, juries for the accusation, juries for the judgement, having all, or nearly all, expressed your opinions; having done so, some of you, with scandalous ferocity!'

But Lanjuinais was unable to gain his point, and after scenes of fearful disorder, during which 'sixty to eighty deputies at a time charged into the middle of the hall amidst the applause of the tribunes,' the Convention refused to examine the defence put forward by the King's counsels and decided on the motion of Couthon to discuss the judgement to be passed on him. The so-called 'trial' was thus seen to have been a pure farce.

The Girondins now tried to save the King, not from any motives of loyalty, and actuated less by humanity or justice than by the growing fear that the 'Mountain' would fall on them and crush them—as indeed it did only five months

later. But, too cowardly to pronounce him innocent, they adopted the subterfuge of demanding an appeal to the people, and the discussion on this point raged until January 3, when an interval occurred for wrangles between the opposing factions. The discussion was then resumed and on the 14th the Convention decided that the following three questions should be put to the vote:

1. Is Louis guilty?
2. Shall your decision be subjected to ratification by the people?
3. What penalty has Louis incurred?

Voting on the first question began on the following day, and such was the intimidation exercised over the minds of the deputies that only 14 dared to declare the King innocent, though not to record their votes to this effect—37 in all, including these, refused to vote for various reasons; 28 were absent, the remaining 683 pronounced the King guilty.

On the second question, out of 717 members present 283 voted for the appeal to the people, 424 against, 29 were absent, 16 refused to vote.

There was thus to be no appeal to the people and it only remained to discuss what penalty should be imposed on the King.

The Convention now proceeded by means of organized intimidation to ensure sufficient votes for death. Lehardy, a deputy from Morbihan, declared in the Assembly that he had heard a colporteur crying out: 'Here is the list of the royalists and aristocrats who have voted for the appeal to the people!' To this had much vaunted democracy now been reduced! At the doors of the Assembly the assassins of d'Orléans, among them foreign brigands, armed with swords and thick sticks, threatened those of the deputies who were suspected of wishing to save the King, and called out furiously: 'His life or yours!' <sup>1</sup> One member, Charles

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, 155; d'Allonville, iii. 138; Montjoie, *Conjuration d'Orléans*, iii. 231; Biré, *Journal d'un Bourgeois*, i. 403; Madelin, *La Révolution*, p. 284.

Villette, reported to the Convention that on entering the hall he had been told that if he did not vote for the death of the King he would be murdered, but he was met only with angry murmurs.

The debate started at ten o'clock in the morning of January 16; in the evening, when the voting was about to begin, Lanjuinais opened the proceedings by asking that, in accordance with the penal code 'framed' by the Constituent Assembly, a majority of two-thirds should be necessary for condemnation; a motion that was seconded by Lehardy of Morbihan. But Danton rose to demand that any majority, however small, should suffice.

At this Lanjuinais uttered an indignant protest. After reminding the Convention that it had already violated the principles of justice and reason, he went on to say:

'You are always invoking the penal code. You say continually, "we are a jury"; well, it is the penal code I invoke, it is the forms of a jury I demand and to which I beg you to make no exception. But you say that laws are made by a majority of one. . . . You have rejected all the forms that perhaps justice, and certainly humanity, demand: the right of challenging the jury and voting in silence which alone can ensure liberty of suffrage. We seem to be deliberating in a free Convention, but it is beneath the daggers and the cannon of the factions.' He ended by demanding that now at least three-quarters of the votes should be required for condemnation.

But the Convention ignored this request and, taking a further step in illegality, decreed that any majority, if only of one vote, should suffice. That is to say, *they altered the law in order to make surer of gaining enough votes for death.* It is difficult to imagine a more infamous proceeding.

In saying that the Convention were 'deliberating beneath daggers,' Lanjuinais only spoke the truth: precisely the same words were used by other members. One of these was Carnot, who said afterwards: 'Louis XVI would have been saved if the Convention had not deliberated beneath

daggers.' <sup>1</sup> Yet he himself voted for death! The Girondins, terrorized by the 'Mountain,' dared not stand their ground. Vergniaud, who had said indignantly: '*I vote the death of Louis XVI?* No, no, it is an insult to believe me capable of such an unworthy action!' voted for it none the less, and his example was followed by the rest of his party.<sup>2</sup>

The voting, which began at 8 p.m. on January 16, continued until 11 p.m. of the 17th. No words can describe the frenzy of that all-night sitting. Mercier, the revolutionary journalist and a furious enemy of the King, alone has given us some idea of the revolting scenes that took place: <sup>3</sup>

'The famous sitting that decided the fate of Louis XVI lasted seventy-two hours.<sup>4</sup> One no doubt pictures to oneself meditation, silence, a sort of religious terror in that hall; not at all. The end of the hall was transformed into an opera box, where ladies in the most charming *négligé à la française* and oranges and drank liqueurs; people went to greet them and then returned to their places. The ushers on the side of the "Mountain" played the part of box openers at the Opera; one saw them at every moment opening the doors of reserved tribunes and gallantly showing in the mistresses of the Duc d'Orléans-Égalité caparisoned with tricolors ribbons.

'Although all signs of approbation and improbation had been forbidden, nevertheless, on the side of the "Mountain," the mother duchess, the amazon of the Jacobite bands, gave long "Ha! ha's!" whenever she did not hear the word "death" sounding loudly in her ears.'

Croker explains this as referring to Mme de Montesson,

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires* (1824), i. 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire et Mémoires du Général Comte de Ségur* (1873), i. 13. This Comte de Ségur is the son of the one who is mentioned in the Bibliography, who wrote *Mémoires, souvenirs et anecdotes*.

<sup>3</sup> Mercier, *Le Nouveau Paris*, vi. 156.

<sup>4</sup> That is to say, counting from the beginning of the debate, not of the voting, at 10 a.m. of the 16th until 11 p.m. of the 17th, making thirty-seven hours without a break; but the debate continued for two days longer, making three days in all.

the second and morganatic wife of the last Duc d'Orléans, father of 'Égalité,' and adds: 'Her appearance in this place, on this occasion, is one of those petty enigmas of the Revolutionary epoch which we cannot explain.'<sup>1</sup>

The sensation of that night was the rôle of Philippe Égalité, who, until then, many people had believed to be the puppet of a faction rather than the instigator of the villainies perpetrated in his name. But when in the semi-darkness, with flushed face and haggard eyes, he mounted the tribune and uttered those terrible words: 'I vote for death!' even that criminal assembly shuddered, a low murmur—*une sourde rumeur*, says the official report—went round the hall; men rose from their seats, throwing out their hands as if to push him from them, crying out: 'Oh! the monster!' <sup>2</sup> He was to hear those four words 'I vote for death!' repeated mockingly by the crowd on his way to the scaffold ten months later.

Mercier, in a series of lightning touches, goes on to describe the madness and confusion of that night:

'There passed into the tribune countenances rendered more sombre by the dim light, which in slow and sepulchral voices said only the word: "Death!" All these faces passed one after the other, all these tones of voice, in different keys; d'Orléans, hooted at, reviled when he voted for the death of his kinsman; then others calculating whether they had time to dine before giving their vote, whilst women with pins were pricking cards in order to compare the votes, deputies falling asleep and being awakened in order to give their opinion; Manuel, the secretary, making away with a few votes to save the unhappy King and being nearly murdered in the corridors for his infidelity—of all that I saw then no idea can be given, it is impossible to imagine the reality, history will not be able to approach it.'

Although not a single deputy present dared to record

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the French Revolution*, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 272, and *Conjuration d'Orléans*, iii. 237; Dr. Moore, *Journal*, ii. 580.



his opinion that no penalty should be imposed on the King, a large number opposed the death sentence, others voted for it with postponement, others again, on the proposal of Mailhe, voted for death but for discussion on postponement. The 'Mountain' was solidly for immediate and unconditional death.

When on the second evening of that thirty-six hour sitting the votes came to be counted, it was recorded in the official report that out of the 749 deputies, 28 were absent, 5 refused to vote. The votes of 721 remaining were given as follows: <sup>1</sup>

For imprisonment or banishment	. . .	286
For irons . . . . .	. . . . .	2
For death with postponement . . . . .	. . . . .	46
For death but with Mailhe's amendment, for discussion on postponement . . . . .	. . . . .	26
		<hr/>
Total . . . . .	. . . . .	<u>360</u>

But for immediate death without postponement or discussion the votes amounted to 361. Orléans' had thus proved the casting vote which sealed the fate of the King.

The President, however, announced that the majority for death was of 387 to 334, but this conclusion was reached by adding the 26 who voted for Mailhe's amendment to those for immediate death, which both Mortimer Ternaux and Croker point out to be incorrect. According to a prevailing opinion at the time there was a real majority of 5 for immediate death. But the true figures are difficult to arrive at for contemporaries seem unable to agree. Both Ferrières and Dr. Moore say there were 319 votes for imprisonment or banishment, Fockedeý, a member of the Convention, says as many as 334.<sup>2</sup> This would result in a majority against death. As to votes for death being juggled away by Manuel, as Mercier asserts, the juggling seems to have been all on

<sup>1</sup> Buchez et Roux, xxiii. 206; Mortimer Ternaux, *Histoire de la Terreur*, v. 462.

<sup>2</sup> D'Héricault, *Documents*, ii. 143.

the other side. For d'Allonville relates that Manuel said to him:

'I can swear to you that the majority of votes was not for death; murderers falsified the lists, cowards consented to votes being attributed to them that they had not cast, the 5 non-voters, whose opinions in favour [of the King] could not be doubted, ought to have been counted as present but were not. The majority, apart from all other trickery, was thus very legally against death. I saw all the ruses employed to bring about the condemnation of Louis XVI; I was secretary of the Assembly which I am leaving and fleeing from in horror.'<sup>1</sup>

Whether these statements of Manuel were correct or not, the execution of Louis XVI was murder according to the recognized definition of the term, namely: the act of putting a person to death unlawfully, intentionally and from malice. It was unlawful because:

1. According to the Constitution the Convention had no right to exercise the powers of a tribunal.
2. No criminal act was proved against him.
3. According to the penal code still in force at the outset of the 'trial' there was not a sufficient majority for death.

That it was also performed 'intentionally and from malice' is too obvious to require proof.

The title of this chapter is thus no expression of party feeling but a simple statement of fact. The British press used the same term and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in its number for January 1793, published a fine account of the death of the 'Royal Martyr,' printing the word MURDER in capitals by way of emphasis.

It fell to the lot of Vergniaud as President to announce the results of the voting in the night of January 17 and then to utter the terrible words:

'I declare in the name of the National Convention that the penalty it has pronounced against Louis Capet is death.'

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, iii. 139. Manuel was guillotined on Nov. 15, 1793.

The King's defenders, who had been waiting in the room next door to the Assembly, were so overcome on hearing the verdict that, according to Montjoie, all three fainted with horror. But having recovered consciousness they advanced into the hall and Desèze presented a letter from Louis XVI asking for an appeal to the nation, and going on himself to point out the injustice of counting the majority according to a decree passed at the beginning of the sitting. Tronchet followed, insisting on the point and reiterating Lanjuinais' objection that two-thirds of the votes were required for a majority—according to the penal code. Malesherbes was too shattered with grief to be able to speak more than a few words in a voice broken by sobs.

But nothing they could have said would have availed to move these men of blood, and leaving them to continue the debate on postponement of the sentence amidst the usual scenes of violence, they set forth to break the news to the King.

From the fever and turmoil of the Convention to the peace of the Temple! Louis XVI was perhaps the calmest man in Paris that day. When his three defenders appeared before him with stricken faces and tears in their eyes and Malesherbes broke the silence by saying: 'Sire, you are courageous . . . your fatal verdict has been pronounced . . .' the King answered serenely:

'So much the better, that relieves me of uncertainty!'

And seeing Malesherbes' grief he added:

'If you love me, my dear Malesherbes, why envy me the only refuge that is left me?'

'Ah, Sire, there is still hope; they are going to debate whether there shall be a postponement. . . .'

'No, no,' said the King, 'there is no hope. . . . In the name of God, do not weep, my dear Malesherbes, we shall meet again in a happier world!'<sup>1</sup>

Malesherbes then told him that on coming out of the

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 278.

Convention he had been surrounded by people who had assured him they would not allow the King to perish.

'Do you know them?' said Louis XVI. 'Then go back and try to find them; tell them that I should never forgive them if a drop of blood were shed on my account. I would not have it shed when it might have saved my throne and my life, and I do not repent of it, no, monsieur, I do not repent.'<sup>1</sup>

The King was not playing a part, that weariness, that *dégoût de la vie* which had overcome him at intervals throughout the past two years, enabled him to regard death as a merciful release, and his conscience being at rest it held no terror for him.

When two days later Malesherbes came to tell him that the debate on postponement of the sentence had ended in 310 votes for and 380 against, so that there was a clear majority for immediate death, he found the King seated with his back to the lamp placed on the mantelpiece, his elbows resting on the table in front of him and his face buried in his hands. Raising his head as his devoted counsel entered, he looked him in the eyes, then rising, he said solemnly:

'Monsieur de Malesherbes, for two days I have been trying to discover whether in the course of my reign I have deserved the least reproach from my subjects. Well, I swear to you in all truth as a man about to appear before God that I have always wished for the happiness of my people, that I have never formed a wish opposed to them.'

Malesherbes was only to see the King once again and then to say farewell. Louis XVI was standing between two municipal officers, reading. Looking up as the old man came towards him he embraced him saying: 'Death holds no fear for me; I have the greatest confidence in the mercy of God.'<sup>2</sup> After this Malesherbes was no longer admitted to the Temple.

<sup>1</sup> Extrait du *Journal de M. de Malesherbes* given in *Journal de Cléry*, p. 331; and Beaucourt, *Captivité . . . de Louis XVI*, i. 291.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 334.

Cléry was now the only friend left to the King, but the faithful valet's distress was more calculated to unnerve than to console his master. At the sight of Cléry's pallor and the tears coursing down his cheeks as he held the shaving-bowl, the King himself turned pale, but seeing the man shaking in every limb he grasped him firmly by the hands and said in a low voice: 'Come, more courage!' Then having shaved himself he settled down quietly to read.

The same evening Cléry, who had recovered his composure, expressed his hope that there would be a postponement of the death sentence. Louis XVI replied that he had no hope and went on to talk of the state of the country, saying with a sudden flash of prophetic instinct: 'I see the people given over to anarchy, becoming the victim of all the factions, crimes following on each other and long dissensions rending France.'<sup>1</sup>

At two o'clock in the afternoon of January 20 a committee headed by Garat, the Minister of Justice, arrived to notify the King formally of his condemnation to death within twenty-four hours. Louis XVI received them calmly and handed them a letter in which he asked for a delay of three days in which to prepare himself to appear before God, he also asked to be allowed a confessor and to see his family alone. The delay was refused, but the requests for a confessor and for permission to see his family were granted. The King then asked for the Abbé Edgeworth, the Irish confessor recommended to him by Madame Elisabeth.

A message was sent to the Abbé, and at five o'clock in the evening he set forth with Garat in the Minister's carriage for the Temple. During that drive the two maintained a solemn and almost unbroken silence, only once Garat, suddenly smitten by remorse, burst out with the words:

'Good God! with what a fearful mission I am entrusted!' And, speaking of the King, he added: 'What a man! What

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Cléry*, p. 158.

resignation! What courage! No, Nature alone could not have given him such strength; there is something superhuman in it.' <sup>1</sup>

On arrival at the Temple, Garat went on ahead to the King's room, and the Abbé, following a few moments later, found Louis XVI surrounded by eight or ten officials, who had been ordered not to let him out of their sight. The King, said the Abbé Edgeworth afterwards, 'was in the midst of them, calm, tranquil and even gracious, not one of them around him looked so assured as he did.' At a sign from him that he wished to be left alone with his confessor, they went out, and the Abbé, overcome 'at the sight of this prince, once so great and now so unfortunate,' threw himself on his knees at his feet weeping and saying: 'Oh, Sire, I ought to give you comfort but I have none for myself.' At this the King's sang-froid for a moment deserted him; he fell on the Abbé's shoulder and wept, but recovering himself he said: 'Forgive this sign of weakness, but I have lived so long amongst my enemies that the sight of a faithful subject goes to my heart, it is a sight to which I am unaccustomed and it touches me in spite of myself.'

Then leading the Abbé into the round turret opening out of his room that served him as a study, provided only with a poor earthenware stove, a table and three leather chairs, the King invited him to sit down and began quietly to discuss the business of the hour. Taking his will from his pocket he proceeded to read it aloud in a firm voice and with a countenance which only betrayed emotion when he pronounced the names of those dear to him.

This ended, he spoke of other matters, enquired after the state of the clergy, lamenting over the lot of those who had remained in France and paying tribute to the English in whose country others had taken refuge; he repeated again and again: 'Ah! the generous nation! the generous nation!' He spoke too of the Duc d'Orléans, whose infamous

<sup>1</sup> *Dernières Heures de Louis XVI*, by the Abbé Edgeworth, given in *Journal de Cléry*, p. 200.

vote had reached his ears, saying: 'What have I done to my cousin that he should pursue me thus? But he is more to be pitied than I am. I would not change places with him.'

But now the King was called upon to face the supreme ordeal, the parting with his family. The interview had been arranged to take place in the small dining-room which was separated from the antechamber by a glass partition, so that the guards would be able to keep watch on the royal family throughout. Louis XVI had made all preparations with the greatest care, ordering water and glasses to be placed on the table, then returning to the Abbé in the turret he awaited them in a state of great agitation. When at half-past eight a commissary came to say they had come down from the upper floor, the King rose quickly and hurried out to meet them.

The Queen came first, holding the Dauphin by the hand, Madame Elisabeth and Madame Royale followed after; all threw themselves into the arms of the King, weeping bitterly. According to one account Louis XVI appeared at first so serene that for a moment the hope flashed through their minds that he had been reprieved, but they were soon undeceived.<sup>1</sup> At the sight of their grief his serenity deserted him. 'He wept at our sorrow,' says Madame Royale, 'and not at his own death.'

Marie Antoinette wanted to draw him into his bedroom, but Louis XVI said: 'No, I can only see you here,' and he led them into the dining-room where they sat down, the Queen and Madame Elisabeth on either side of the King with their arms around him, Madame Royale in front, whilst the Dauphin stood between his knees.

What passed at that last tragic interview can never be known in detail, for Madame Royale, the only survivor present, gave only a brief account. But from the evidence of the commissaries stationed behind the glass partition, from Cléry, who from the same point obtained a glimpse

<sup>1</sup> D'Allonville, iii. 157.

of the scene, and from the Abbé, who from his turret could hear a part of what went on, it is possible to reconstruct it in imagination.

According to Cléry the interview lasted an hour and three-quarters, during which the listeners could hear no words spoken but only the voice of the King, interrupted at intervals by the sobs of the women. But from Madame Royale we know that he told them the story of his so-called trial, that he spoke to his little son of religion, urging him to pardon those who had brought about his father's death. He also made him promise never to seek to avenge it. Then he gave his blessing to both his children. For half an hour not a word was spoken; as they sat close together, wrapped in each other's arms, the silence was broken only by the sound of the women's weeping, subdued at first, but growing louder and more passionate, rising into screams of anguish which tore the heart of the Abbé in his tower. At last, he says, the tears ceased because they had no more to shed; and they talked on quietly in hushed voices.

Marie Antoinette wished that they should all spend the whole night with the King but he refused, knowing that he had need of all his strength for the morrow. The moment had come to part. Rising to his feet he stood in the middle of the room with one arm round the Queen, who leant almost fainting on his shoulder with the Dauphin pressed to her side, clasping the hands of his father and mother, kissing and weeping over them alternately. Madame Elisabeth, holding her brother's arm, stood with eyes raised to Heaven in prayer.

Then the King moved towards the door, saying: 'I shall see you again in the morning,' for at that moment he intended to say his last farewell to them before starting for the scaffold. So after embracing them all tenderly, he tore himself at last from their arms, saying: 'Good-bye—good-bye.'

It seems to have been then that Marie Antoinette, losing control of her temper, said furiously, as she passed before



the municipal officers: 'You are all scoundrels!' (Vous êtes tous des scélérats!) <sup>1</sup>

This was the only occasion throughout the whole Revolution when the Queen allowed an angry word to escape her.

After his family had left him the King remained for some time with his eyes fixed on the ground without speaking, then with a deep sigh he said: 'Ce moment était terrible.' <sup>2</sup>

Returning to the Abbé in the turret chamber he threw himself into a chair, crying out: 'Ah, monsieur, what have I been through! Why must I love so much and be so dearly loved—Oh, my God! bless them, bless them for ever!'

It was now past ten o'clock; for two hours longer the King and his confessor remained together. Some years afterwards the Abbé told in conversation the story of what passed, but when he came to the parting between the King and his family he said that the scene 'surpassed the power of description. Mr. Edgeworth did not attempt it, but leant his head on the table and wept.' <sup>3</sup>

Yet how vividly does his written account enable one to picture that dreadful winter's night in the turret chamber of the Temple! This King, who had once been so great and powerful, sitting over the wretched stove trying to warm himself, this young man—for he was still only thirty-eight—full of life and vigour, to whom a violent death in any form must have seemed abhorrent, nerving himself to face a death which in its publicity, its horror and its degradation, needed all the faith of a martyr to contemplate with tranquillity. For although in spirit he had risen above the troubles of this passing world, the flesh would have been more than human if it had not quailed at the thought of the morrow. With eyes fixed on the Hereafter he saw Heaven awaiting him, but through what a hideous gateway he must pass to reach it!

<sup>1</sup> Buchez et Roux, xxiii. 329. This finds confirmation in the words of Dr. Moore: 'No consideration could prevent her from pouring forth her indignation in the most violent expressions against the enemies of her husband.' *Journal*, ii. 596.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Moore, *Ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Mary Frampton* (1886), p. 87.

The Abbé Edgeworth was able to procure him one supreme consolation. With great difficulty he obtained permission to administer the sacrament to him on the following morning and to have the sacred vessels brought in from a neighbouring church. Assured of this the King said he could now depart this life in peace. 'God is my Comforter,' he added, 'my enemies cannot take his peace from me.'<sup>1</sup> Then, yielding to the Abbé's persuasions, he went to bed and slept calmly for four hours.

He was still sleeping when Cléry awoke him at five o'clock. Rising immediately he dressed and passed into the turret for prayer, whilst the altar was set up in his room. At six o'clock the Abbé entered, and the King, kneeling on the bare floor, heard mass and received the sacrament.

After this he was ready to face death with resignation. 'My God,' he said to the Abbé Edgeworth, 'how fortunate I am to have kept to my principles, without them where should I be now? But with them how gentle death must seem. Yes, there is an incorruptible Judge above who will show me the justice refused to me by men.'

Louis XVI was literally a martyr to the principles of his religion. A few days earlier, with a sudden insight into the savagely anti-religious character of the Revolution, he had said bitterly: 'If I had been without faith, without law, without morals, I should have suited them better!'<sup>2</sup> The desecration of the churches, the orgies of blasphemy that followed on his death, showed how rightly he had apprehended the nature of the forces arrayed against him.

Day was now dawning, a wet and wintry January day. The snow that had covered Paris like a pall was slowly melting. In the distance the drums could be heard beating the générale. The Abbé shuddered, but the King said quietly:

'That is probably the National Guards beginning to muster.'

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Mary Frampton*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Montjoie, *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 66.

Soon after the sound of cavalry could be heard in the courtyard below—the trampling of horses' feet, the voices of officers.

'They appear to be approaching,' said the King with the same sang-froid.

Louis XVI was now ready, dressed in a brown coat, grey breeches, a white quilted waistcoat and white stockings. His last arrangements had been quietly made; he had emptied his pockets and placed the contents—his pocket-book, snuff-box and lorgnette—methodically on the mantel-piece. Then, after mass, he had said his last words to Cléry, thanked him for his devotion, and when this faithful retainer fell on his knees before him to receive his blessing, he had given it, then raised him to his feet and pressed him to his heart.

He had not, however, said a last farewell to his family. Remembering his promise to the Queen, he was about to go to her when the Abbé implored him to spare her a trial she would not have the strength to bear. The King paused, then with deep sorrow in his face, he said:

'You are right, it would be dealing her a death-blow; it will be better for me to forgo this sweet consolation and to let her live on in hope for a few moments longer.'

Drawing Cléry aside he handed him his seal to give to his son, his ring for the Queen, a packet containing the hair of his family, and said:

'Tell the Queen, my dear children and my sister that I had promised to see them this morning, but I wished to save them the pain of this cruel separation; how much it costs me to leave without receiving their last embraces!' and dashing the tears from his eyes, he added: 'I trust you to say farewell to them for me.'

The King then asked for scissors so that Cléry might cut off his hair in preparation for the guillotine, but this was refused him. A municipal officer told Cléry that he must go with the King to undress him on the scaffold, and when the valet, sick with horror, had nerved himself for this

dreadful task rather than allow him to be touched with brutal hands, another municipal officer countermanded the order, saying: 'The executioner is good enough for him.'

It was now nine o'clock. Outside the noise was growing louder, the roll of drums, the sound of marching feet, the clatter of horses, the movement of heavy guns; inside, the iron doors creaking on their hinges, opening and shutting with resounding crashes. Then came a knocking at the door; it was Santerre and his band who had come to fetch the King. At this Louis XVI, saying to Santerre: 'I ask you for one moment,' retired quickly into the turret room where the Abbé was waiting, and throwing himself on his knees before him, said:

'All is consummated, monsieur, give me your blessing and pray God that He may sustain me to the end.'

It was now he heard for the first time that the Abbé was to go with him to the scaffold. Fortified by this assurance he went forward calmly to meet Santerre and his troop of men. His last will and testament was in his hand; handing this to Jacques Roux, one of the two apostate priests who was to accompany him, he said:

'I beg you to give this paper to the Queen, my wife.'

But the man answered brutally:

'That has nothing to do with me, we are not here to do commissions for you, but to take you to the scaffold.'

The paper was taken charge of by another municipal officer.

Cléry, weeping bitterly, came forward to help the King on with his coat.

'I do not need that,' said Louis XVI, 'only give me my hat.'

Cléry handed him the small three-cornered hat with the tricolore cockade. The King pressed his hand for the last time, then turning to Santerre, he said in a firm voice:

'Let us go (marchons!).'

The whole troop descended the stairs and, as they reached

the courtyard, a roll of drums and flourish of trumpets announced that the King had left the Temple.

At the entrance of the second courtyard a carriage was waiting. Why was it not a tumbril such as was employed for the Queen and all the subsequent victims of the Terror? The Baron de Vinck d'Orp, who—towards the end of the nineteenth century—made a special study of the execution of Louis XVI,<sup>1</sup> points out that from the time the guillotine was invented Louis XVI was the only victim who was taken to it in a carriage, and he advances the opinion that this was not out of respect for the person of the King, but out of fear that an attempt would be made to rescue him. At the first sight of any such movement on his behalf orders had been given that he was to be instantly assassinated, and it would be easier to make sure of this by placing opposite him, in a closed carriage, men on whom they could depend to stab him to the heart, than to commit the crime in an open tumbril.

The carriage chosen for the occasion, a dark green coach, has been described as a cab, but the Baron de Vinck d'Orp shows from the Archives of the Hôtel de Ville, which was destroyed in 1871, that the carriage of the Mayor of Paris, Chambon, was requisitioned for the occasion.

Tremendous military preparations had been made in order to guard the King on his way to the Place de la Révolution (now the Place de la Concorde): 1200 men escorted him from the Temple, battalions of National Guards, of mounted police and Marseillais lined the route, cannon were placed at the street corners, the whole town had literally been placed in a state of siege, and all this as a precaution against a rising of the people in whose name the crime was being committed!

But Paris was too stupefied to move. A vast funereal silence wrapped the wet and fog-bound city, almost all the shops were closed, families remained in tears behind their shuttered windows, the streets were deserted. The people

<sup>1</sup> *Le Meurtre du 21 Janvier* (1877).

gathered along the route maintained the same silence; the only sounds were the roll of drums sodden with the rain, and the crashing of the cannon dragged before and behind the carriage over the stone pavés.

Through the misty window of the coach the King could be dimly seen, his face concealed by his hat as he bent over his breviary reading the prayers for the dying.

Suddenly, at the corner of the Rue de Cléry and the Rue Beauregard, the procession, which had been advancing at foot's pace, halted for a moment, and cries went up from a small crowd of people collected on the rising ground of the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle where a scuffle was taking place. It was the one attempt at rescue planned by that courageous royalist, the Baron de Batz, who, the day before, had enlisted a band of 500 men all ready to risk their lives for the King. But somehow the plan had been betrayed to the Convention with the names of the confederates, and police were stationed at their doors to prevent them going out. Only 25 succeeded in reaching the appointed spot where the Baron de Batz had been waiting since an early hour. Yet undeterred by the meagreness of his following he went forward, and as soon as the coach began slowly to ascend the slope of the Boulevard, he dashed towards it waving his hat in one hand and a sabre in the other, crying out loudly: 'To me, all who would save the King!' But the crowd, as if struck by paralysis, made no movement, only two of the confederates were able to join him and were immediately massacred. The Baron would have suffered the same fate if a friend had not come to his rescue and the National Guards had not allowed him to escape through their ranks. He was to live to make further desperate efforts on behalf of the Queen later on.

This scene had occupied only a few minutes and the whole affair was over so quickly that the occupants of the coach appear to have noticed nothing, for the Abbé Edgeworth only heard afterwards of the heroic attempt that had been made. According to his account the procession took no

less than two hours to reach the Place de la Révolution, but this is clearly an exaggeration; one hour seems to have been the time occupied, for it was about ten o'clock when the coach drew up in the midst of the great space that had been cleared around the scaffold, surrounded with cannon and a vast multitude in arms.

One of the executioners opened the door. The King, placing his hand on the knee of the Abbé Edgeworth, said to the two gendarmes who had escorted him: 'Messieurs, I recommend this gentleman to your care.'

'Good, good, we will take care of him,' one of them answered ironically.

The King then descended from the carriage and advanced towards the scaffold. Three of the executioners surrounded him and attempted to take off his coat, but the King, pushing them away with dignity, removed it himself and unfastened his shirt and collar. It was then that occurred what was falsely described as a struggle. The executioners, who had been for a moment daunted by the noble pride of the King's countenance, recovered their audacity and tried to tie his hands behind his back. At this the King, outraged, snatched his hands away and said indignantly: 'Tie me? I will never consent to that, do what you are ordered but you shall never tie me; give up that idea!'

The Abbé Edgeworth, fearing the indignity of a struggle, then said with tears in his eyes:

'Sire, this fresh outrage is only one more point of resemblance between your Majesty and the God who will reward him.'

At these words the King lifted his eyes to Heaven with an agonized expression and answered: 'Assuredly nothing less than His example could make me submit to such an affront.' Then, turning to the executioners, he added: 'Do what you will. I will drink the cup to the dregs.'

His hands were tied behind him and it was with difficulty that he mounted the steep steps of the scaffold. The Abbé

was obliged to support him, and at that moment, with a sudden inspiration, uttered the memorable words:

‘Son of Saint Louis, ascend to Heaven! (Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel!)’<sup>1</sup>

Fortified by this sublime command, the King seemed to recover all his strength, and, springing forward from the hands of the Abbé as he reached the last step, he crossed the scaffold firmly and, silencing with a glance the drums beating around it, said in a voice so loud that it could be heard across that sea of heads as far as the swing bridge of the Tuileries:

‘People, I die innocent of all the crimes imputed to me! I pardon the authors of my death and I pray God that the blood you are about to shed may never recoil on France!’

The King would have continued to speak but Santerre, riding his horse up to the foot of the scaffold, ordered a roll of drums which drowned his voice. At the same moment the executioners seized him and bound him to the plank. The Abbé Edgeworth, kneeling beside him with his face close to his, remained in this position as the blade descended, so that his face was sprinkled with the blood of the King.

The great crime was consummated.

The Abbé, looking up, saw with horror the head of the martyr held aloft amidst the savage cries of the murderers and the mob at their command. Rising to his feet, dazed, he stumbled down the steps of the scaffold and, hardly knowing where he was going, found his way to Malesherbes, and the two men mingled their tears.

It was then that Malesherbes, his grief giving way to rage, uttered a diatribe which, as the Abbé Edgeworth said afterwards, was worthy of Burke himself:

‘The scoundrels!’ he cried, ‘they have caused him to perish . . . and it is in the name of the nation they have committed this execrable parricide! . . . in the name of the French who, if they had been more worthy of so good a King, would have seen him to have been the best they

<sup>1</sup> On this point see Appendix, p. 524.



had ever had—yes, the best, for he was as religious as Louis IX, as just as Louis XII, as good-hearted as Henri IV, and he had none of their defects—his greatest fault is to have loved us too well, to have considered himself too much as our father and not enough as our King. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

At this supreme moment he realized what was the Power that had sustained Louis XVI in his last moments. Misled in earlier days by the false philosophy of which he now confessed he had been the dupe, Malesherbes went on to say to the Abbé Edgeworth:

‘It is true that religion alone can give one strength to bear such terrible trials with so much dignity.’<sup>2</sup>

Malesherbes was to follow the King he had served so faithfully on to the scaffold fifteen months later. He had said: ‘They will respect my white hairs,’ but the regicides knew no mercy and the brave old man was condemned with all his family as ‘the accomplice of a conspiracy which had existed since 1789 against the sovereignty of the people.’<sup>3</sup>

The Abbé Edgeworth succeeded in escaping from France, and three years later wrote his celebrated account of the sixteen hours he spent with Louis XVI, whom, in a letter to his brother, he described as ‘a prince who, with every virtue, had but one fault—that of thinking too well of others, whilst he refused common justice to himself.’<sup>4</sup>

In England the murder of Louis XVI excited universal horror and indignation; Pitt described it in Parliament as ‘the foulest and most atrocious deed which the history of the world has yet had occasion to attest.’ The British press spoke of it as ‘one of the most atrocious acts that ever disgraced the annals of the world,’ and went on to observe:

‘Of this murdered King, we can only say, that his virtues

<sup>1</sup> Bertrand de Molleville, ii. 351; Beaulieu, iv. 355.

<sup>2</sup> Beaulieu, iv. 356.

<sup>3</sup> Prudhomme, *Dictionnaire des Individus envoyés judiciairement à la mort in Crimes de la Révolution*, ii. 46.

<sup>4</sup> *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown*, edited by H. J. Butler and H. E. Butler (1927), p. 84.

were his ruin: he has suffered for having been a tyrant; and, had he been a tyrant, he would not have suffered. He would then have proceeded in that career of uncontrolled sovereignty, and have commanded a continuance of that submission which waited upon the will of his royal predecessors; but, in fact, there was not a tyrannic principle in his character, which overflowed with benevolence and paternal affection for his people.’<sup>1</sup>

England in those days saw clear; partisan writers had not yet succeeded in obscuring the judgement of the British public. In France too it seemed that in the end truth must prevail. ‘The day will come,’ wrote the Comte d’Hézécques a hundred years ago, ‘when the virtues of this prince [Louis XVI] will be appreciated, when complete justice will be done him.’

Louis XVI himself had said to Malesherbes that whatever happened he would win his case because he ‘would leave a stainless memory.’ Little did he dream that even this was to be denied him and that in the pages of history the false accusations of his enemies, the foul insults of the gutter press and the Paris rabble were still to triumph over truth and justice. With a Malesherbes, a Tronchet and a Desèze to stand by him at the bar of the Convention, he was to have no advocate of their calibre to defend him before the tribunal of posterity; the admirers of the ‘Mountain,’ the apologists of the Girondins and of Philippe Égalité, the subtle indoctrinators in the Masonic Lodges were to have it all their own way in the future.

In death as in life it was the tragic destiny of Louis XVI never to receive justice at the hands of men.

<sup>1</sup> *The General Evening Post* for January 26, 1793, and *The York Chronicle* for January 31, 1793.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CONCIERGERIE

AFTER that last terrible parting with the King in the evening of January 20 his family had been taken back to their rooms on the upper floor. The Queen, who had hardly the strength to undress the Dauphin and put him to bed, threw herself on her own bed without taking off her clothes, and Dr. Moore relates that 'her screams were heard at intervals all that night of agony and horror.'<sup>1</sup> At a quarter past six in the morning the door opened, and for a moment the royal family expected to see the King, as he had promised, for a last farewell, but it was only someone who had come to fetch a breviary for him, and they were spared that further ordeal. It was not until some four hours later that the tumult arising from the city and the savage cries of the populace told them the great crime had been consummated.

Of all human emotions suspense is the most agonizing; the blow, when finally it falls, often stuns the sufferer into momentary insensibility. The suspense Marie Antoinette had endured during the past six weeks whilst separated from Louis XVI and unable even to communicate with him, culminating in the torture of that last night when the blade was literally suspended over his head, had been such that now the foul deed was done and nothing remained to hope for, it seemed as if all feeling had left her. She had wept so much that she could weep no more, and it was dry-eyed and numb with misery that she asked to be allowed to see Cléry so as to hear what he had to tell of the King's last words before leaving for the scaffold. But this was refused her, and indeed Cléry himself was so distracted by

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, ii. 596.



Photo : W. F. Mansell  
MARIE ANTOINETTE AS A WIDOW IN THE TEMPLE  
*from the Portrait by Kucharski in the Musée de Versailles.*



grief that he could have proved no consolation. Obligated to sit at supper with Santerre that evening and listen to his boasting of how he had drowned the King's voice with the roll of drums, the devoted valet, unable to touch any food, had risen from the table almost fainting. Goret, the kindly municipal officer, revived him with brandy and spent the night at his bedside.

The Queen expressed the wish to see Goret, who went up to her room and found the family collected sadly around a stove, and touched by his sympathy their tears began to flow afresh.

'Madame,' Goret said to the Queen in a trembling voice, 'you must keep up your strength for the sake of your family.'

Marie Antoinette then asked that they might be allowed mourning, and this request being granted a dressmaker known to her was sent for and the necessary garments prepared. The Queen, seeing her children for the first time in black, said with a sigh: 'My poor children, for you it will be a long time, for me it will be always.'

From this moment she would no longer go down to the garden, saying she could not bear to pass the door of the King's room on the floor below; Goret then proposed that in order to get air they should go up to the Tower of the Temple, and from that time it was there the family took their daily walks, though the space was so small that it provided little exercise.

A few days after the death of the King, Toulan, the municipal officer, who had already shown his loyalty to the royal family, together with another named Lepître, who had been newly appointed, managed to arrange that they should be on guard together so as to be able to bring consolation to the prisoners. In collaboration with the Baron de Batz, who had made the heroic attempt to save the King on his way to the scaffold, and the Chevalier de Jarjayes, husband of one of the Queen's waiting-women who had long been active in her service, they now devised a plot for rescuing the royal family from the Temple.

Toulan's plan was to conceal some municipal officers' uniforms in the Tower which the Queen and Madame Elisabeth should put on, with tricolore scarves round their shoulders, and thus disguised walk out of their prison. At the same time Madame Royale and the Dauphin were to be got out in another manner. Every evening a man came to light the lamps outside the Temple, accompanied by his two children. On the appointed night a devoted royalist named Ricard was to take the place of the usual lamplighter, and profiting by the moment when the change of sentries occurred, he was to find his way up to the Queen's room and take the children out with him dressed in the same way as those of the lamplighter. Three carriages were to be provided outside, into which the royal family would get separately and escape, with passports that Lepître would be able to procure for them, through Normandy to England.

The coup was to be brought off on March 8; unfortunately food riots broke out at this moment and at the same time the Republican armies met with reverses at the front, so that stricter supervision was exercised over suspects leaving Paris and foreign passports were no longer obtainable. The plan had therefore to be postponed.

Jarjays, moreover, thought the whole thing too complicated; it seemed to him impossible that four people could all be got out of the Temple at the same time without being recognized. But it might be possible to rescue one alone. Accordingly, he and Toulan devised a fresh scheme according to which Jarjays would get into the Temple and change clothes with the Queen, who in this disguise might be able to get past the guards. Marie Antoinette at first consented, but at the last moment could not bring herself to leave her children, and refused to escape. In a note to Jarjays, conveyed to him by Toulan, she wrote:

'We have had a beautiful dream; that is all. But we have gained much in finding, on this occasion, a fresh proof of your entire devotion to me. You will always find in me character and courage, but the interests of my son are the

only ones that guide me. Whatever happiness I should have found in being out of here, I cannot consent to part from him. I could enjoy nothing without my children, and this idea does not leave me even a regret.' <sup>1</sup>

So the whole plan was finally abandoned. But this did not prevent its authors from being betrayed to the Commune. The Tisons, husband and wife, who were employed as servants to the princesses, had overheard some of the municipal officers speaking to the Queen and Madame Elisabeth in low voices, and in a fit of temper Tison denounced six of them, including Toulan and Lepître. Mme Tison confirmed his evidence. At a quarter to eleven in the night of April 20 Hébert arrived at the Temple and, waking up the prisoners, ordered a search to be made in their rooms which lasted no less than five hours. Nothing compromising was found, nevertheless the six municipal officers were suspended from office and Toulan and Lepître finally dismissed from service at the Temple. Toulan was brought later on before the revolutionary tribunal and guillotined on June 30, 1794. Lepître, however, survived the Terror, and the Chevalier, later General de Jarjayes, succeeded in getting out of France in order to carry out a mission entrusted him by Marie Antoinette.

It will be remembered that before leaving for the scaffold Louis XVI had handed Cléry his seal, wedding-ring and the small packet of hair to be given to the Queen, but these had been taken from Cléry by the Commune and placed under seals in the room the King had occupied. Toulan, however, managed to abstract them and bring them to the Queen who, in order to put them in a place of safety, asked Jarjayes to take them to the Comtes de Provence and d'Artois. Jarjayes, after some delay—for he could not immediately abandon all hope of saving the Queen—finally started on his journey after receiving a farewell note from her in which she said: 'How glad I shall be if we can soon

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Baron de Goguelat* (1823), p. 78 and in facsimile; *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 433.



be reunited! I can never show enough gratitude for all you have done for us. Good-bye! This word is cruel!’<sup>1</sup>

Thus all plans for escape were readily abandoned by Marie Antoinette, all her thoughts now were for the husband she had lost, for the children to whom she had literally sacrificed her life, for the sister who had so heroically shared their sufferings from the beginning. For to Marie Antoinette Madame Elisabeth had become more than a sister-in-law: the misunderstandings created by Madame Adélaïde in the old days at Versailles had long since been swept away; from the time the aunts had emigrated these two had begun to know each other better, but after the 10th of August the understanding between them had been complete, and Madame Elisabeth had come to love and appreciate the splendid qualities of the Queen which had been so developed by adversity.

Montjoie relates that he asked someone who was near the royal family in the Temple: ‘If the doors of Madame Elisabeth’s prison were opened to her and she were free to go where she liked, would she accept her liberty?’ and received the answer given with heat: ‘It is not a question to ask, Madame Elisabeth is inseparable from the Queen, she would not leave her friend for the most splendid crown of the Universe.’<sup>2</sup>

They were together now in their care of the two children, whose health, as well as their own, had begun to suffer from the long confinement. The Queen had grown pitifully thin, but a visitor to the Temple in May 1793 declared that otherwise she had changed very little; Madame Elisabeth, however, ‘was so unrecognizable that he only knew who she was when the Queen called her “my sister.” She was wearing a nightcap and a dress of very common Indian cotton. Little Madame (Royale) had her body covered with ulcers.’<sup>3</sup>

The health of the Dauphin had also begun to decline,

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 436.

<sup>2</sup> *Éloge de Louis XVI*, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 73.

the poor little boy complained to his mother of 'a pain in the side which prevented him from laughing.' He can have had little cause for mirth in this grim Tower of the Temple! But his gay humour had still not deserted him; the worst was yet to come. His charm and beauty had even had the effect of melting the heart of Mme Tison, who became so attached to him that when he fell ill she was suddenly overcome with remorse at her treachery. This preyed on her mind to such an extent that she began to talk to herself, raving about prisons and scaffolds and finally, throwing herself at the feet of the Queen in the presence of the municipal officers, she cried out: 'Madame, I implore your Majesty's pardon, I am miserable for I am the cause of your death and that of Madame Elisabeth!'

The two princesses raised her gently to her feet, but it was too late to save her reason. The poor woman went completely off her head and had to be removed to the Hôtel-Dieu.

Other attempts were made at this moment to save the royal family. The indefatigable Baron de Batz, who miraculously escaped capture, had not given up all hope and had collected round him a band of ardent royalists ready to support any desperate venture. Batz even managed to get himself and another of his allies—a grocer who was secretly a royalist, named Cortey—put on duty at the Temple, where he took into his confidence a lemonade-seller and municipal officer called Michonis, formerly an ardent revolutionary, who had been won over by the marvellous goodness and resignation of the prisoners. The three conspirators—Batz, Cortey and Michonis—now formed another plan much on the lines of the last, according to which the princesses in uniforms provided by Cortey were to be got out by a patrol under his command with the young 'King'—now known to royalists as Louis XVII—hidden in the midst of them. All was arranged when at the last moment the cobbler Simon, who had been given a post by the Commune at the Temple, got wind of the affair

and reported Michonis to the Commune. This time, however, Michonis succeeded in justifying himself and the elusive Baron once more disappeared into Paris, but the project had failed and for the time being all plans of rescue had to be abandoned.

But now the cruellest blow of all was to fall on Marie Antoinette. In the preceding April the new Comité de Salut Public, that sanguinary committee of the Terror, had been instituted on the same day that the Revolutionary Tribunal began its sittings and on July 1 decreed that the Dauphin should be taken away from his mother and imprisoned in another part of the Temple. At half-past nine in the evening of July 3 six municipal officers entered the room where he was lying asleep in bed with the Queen and Madame Elisabeth seated beside him, mending their clothes, whilst Madame Royale read aloud to them from a book of devotions. The leader of the band then announced that by order of the Comité 'the son of Capet should be separated from his mother.'

Marie Antoinette rose to her feet, pale and trembling.

'Messieurs,' she said in a broken voice, 'the Commune cannot think of parting me from my son; he is so young, so weak, he needs my care!'

'The Comité has passed this decree and we must execute it immediately,' the officer replied inexorably.

'But I cannot bear this parting!' the Queen cried with tears in her eyes, 'in the name of Heaven do not put me through this cruel trial.'

Madame Elisabeth and Madame Royale joined their tears and prayers to hers.

Then followed a terrible and heart-rending scene. The three princesses, gathering round the bed of the little prince as if to barricade it with their frail bodies, wept, implored with clasped hands, descended to the humblest supplications in the hope of melting those hearts of stone.

'What is the use of crying?' answered the officers, 'give him up with good grace or we shall take him by force.'

As they advanced to seize him the Dauphin awoke, and, realizing what was happening, threw himself screaming into his mother's arms, sobbing:

'Maman, Maman, do not leave me!'

Marie Antoinette pressed him passionately to her heart, kissed him, soothed him, and holding with one hand desperately to the bedstead, cried out: 'You shall kill me before you take him from me!'

But it was all in vain. After a whole hour had passed in entreaties on one side, in threats and insults on the other, the Queen, weeping bitterly, was obliged to dress him, covering each little garment with tears and kisses as, for the last time, her gentle hands fastened them around him. Then with a superhuman effort she dried her eyes and, holding him by the shoulders, said solemnly:

'My child, we have got to part. Remember your duty when I shall be no longer with you. Do not forget the good God or your mother who loves you. Be good, patient and upright and your father will bless you from Heaven above.'

Then kissing him once again she handed him over to his jailers. The little boy clung to her dress, but his mother told him to obey their orders and he allowed himself to be dragged away.

Then Marie Antoinette, seeing the door close behind him, threw herself on to his empty bed in an agony of weeping.

Never again were they to meet on earth. The little prince, given over to the charge of Simon, cried for two days on end and then began to sink into the state of apathy in which he seems to have remained during the rest of his life in the Temple.

No form of suffering was thus to be spared Marie Antoinette. From this moment her only thought was to catch a glimpse of her little son, for it was discovered that through a small window in her apartment he could be seen on his way up the staircase to the Tower where Simon sometimes took him for exercise. For hours on end the poor woman

would wait to watch him pass and then she would go up herself to the part of the Tower where the three princesses were allowed to walk and continue to peep at him through a crack in the masonry. It was now her only interest and occupation. But there came a dreadful day when at her post of observation she saw him pale and wretched, dressed in the jacket of the *sans-culottes* known as the *carmagnole*, with the hideous red 'cap of liberty' drawn over his fair curls, cursed and struck at by the foul-mouthed cobbler. At this piteous sight the Queen threw herself weeping into the arms of Madame Elisabeth. She was to be spared however the worst experience of all, which Madame Elisabeth and Madame Royale were destined to endure. Simon, says Madame Royale, 'made him sing at the windows so as to be heard by the guards, with fearful oaths against God, his family and the aristocrats. My mother fortunately did not hear these horrors, she had gone.'

For on August 1 the Convention decreed that Marie Antoinette should be led before the Revolutionary Tribunal. With a refinement of cruelty—a precedent followed by the Bolshevik emulators of the Jacobins—they came by night to fetch her. At two o'clock in the morning of August 2 municipal officers arrived at the Temple and read her the decree of the Convention ordering her to be transferred immediately to the Conciergerie. Marie Antoinette listened without emotion; this time there were neither tears nor sighs. Calmly and with dry eyes she rose and dressed in the presence of the officers, who refused to leave her even for a moment and who now proceeded to search the pockets of her gown, taking from her the few precious possessions she kept there—a small packet containing the hair of her husband and children, a little table of figures from which she had taught the Dauphin to count, the miniatures of her three friends, the Princesse de Lamballe and the Princesses of Hesse and Mecklenburg, a few slips of paper on which prayers were written. These were made into a parcel to be sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal. Nothing

was left her but her watch, a pocket handkerchief, her rings and a locket containing a portrait of the Dauphin.

Marie Antoinette silently kissed her daughter and Madame Elisabeth, then quickly turned her eyes away from them for fear of showing weakness, and without even one last look, left them for ever. On going through one of the low guichets leading to the door out of the Temple she struck her forehead; one of the officers asked whether she had hurt herself. 'Oh, no,' she answered, 'nothing can hurt me now.' She had passed the limit of human suffering.

So she went out into the hot and breathless August night. Overhead the stars were shining brightly as she crossed the strip of garden to the entrance of the Palais where a cab was waiting. Mounting the high step she took her place with a municipal officer and two gendarmes.

Now for the first time in a year she was outside prison walls, leaving behind her the grey Tower where she had endured so much but which still held all that was dear to her in the world. What must have been her thoughts during that silent drive through the streets of Paris, dark and deserted at this early hour, alone with her jailers, going to meet what fate she knew not? The carriage had passed over the bridge across the Seine, the Pont Notre-Dame, and made its way through narrow streets towards the Palais de Justice with its pointed turrets looming through the darkness. Passing through an iron gateway and the courtyard where the tumbrils waited for the victims of the Terror which was now beginning, the carriage drew up at the entrance to the prison of the Palace. The gendarmes got down and knocked loudly on the doors with the butt end of their muskets. The iron gate was opened. Then from the carriage the Queen descended, a majestic figure in her mourning robes; those who stood by noticed the dazzling whiteness of her face contrasting with the deep black of her gown and widow's cap that framed it. Silently she passed through the first and second wicket-gates into the entrance-hall where warders awaited the arrival of each fresh prisoner.

Now she was in the Conciergerie—that 'antechamber of death,' of which the victims of the Terror speak shudderingly. 'You, who have never passed a night there,' says the Comte de Beugnot, 'in the midst of that assemblage of horrors, you have endured nothing, you have never suffered in this world.'

Montjoie has drawn a frightful picture of this entrance to the prison, its darkness illumined only by 'a sepulchral lamp, where night and day the turnkeys and their servants were crowded together, where the fumes of strong liquor which they constantly consumed blended with tobacco smoke, forming a fog that would cause the gorge of the least fastidious to rise.'<sup>1</sup>

As the Queen entered, a crowd of jailers, gendarmes and other prison officials surrounded her and, keeping closely at her side, led her through a third wicket-gate and then, after a few minutes' discussion, down a long dark corridor 'where reigned eternal night,' into a cell known as the Salle du Conseil. By the light of the torches they carried with them—for it was still only three o'clock and day had not begun to dawn—the Queen could dimly discern the outlines of her prison and 'her eyes contemplated with astonishment the horrible nudity of this room.'<sup>2</sup>

Here, then, but for her jailers, she was to be alone, cut off from all those dear to her, from the whole living world outside these walls, from love and sympathy and friendship, bereft of hope and tortured by fears for the fate of those she had left behind her at the Temple. Hitherto they had faced dangers and trials all together, and this warm companionship had gone far to mitigate their sufferings, but now she must sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, alone, unloved, un comforted until the end.

It has been said that the Queen had a little dog which followed her from the Temple to the Conciergerie and remained with her there, but this story rests only on the

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 176

<sup>2</sup> G. Lenotre, *La Captivité et la Mort de Marie Antoinette* (1910), p. 230.

evidence of the Abbé de Salamon, who relates that a pug ran into his cell during his imprisonment there three years later, and that Richard, the concierge, who had been reinstated, told him it had belonged to the Queen. But none of the guards or attendants, who were with her at the Conciergerie and afterwards gave evidence on what had passed, made any allusion to this last little friend of the Queen's, and it seems probable therefore that the Abbé de Salamon's memory was at fault when he wrote his *Mémoires*.

As far as companionship was concerned Marie Antoinette appears then to have been utterly alone during those last months of her life. Unhappily this solitude was only of the spirit, physically she was always to be surrounded, watched and guarded; and not even a moment's privacy, for any purpose, was allowed her. The cell was cut in two by a wooden partition with a gap in the middle serving as a door of communication, closed only by a battered screen. On one side two gendarmes were stationed; the other side occupied by the Queen was furnished with a pallet bed, a table and two prison chairs. Both sides of the room looked out through a small iron-barred window into the courtyard, known as the Cour des Femmes, where, later on, during the Great Terror, the women victims congregated.

At present, however, no women were to be seen there, political prisoners at this date were placed in a different quarter of the prison, and the part round the Queen's cell was reserved mainly for male thieves and murderers.<sup>1</sup> Over 300 of these common malefactors had been butchered there in the angle opening out of the courtyard just to the right of the Queen's window during the Massacres of September—only a year ago those flagstones had been a sea of blood. The criminals now imprisoned here collected around this window or in the cell outside her door which served as a *buvette* where their friends came to visit them, to drink and smoke and indulge in loud conversation intermingled with oaths and obscenities. In the Temple, with all its grimness

<sup>1</sup> Beauheu, v. 301.



there had been quiet and cleanliness, the air that blew in through the screened windows had been comparatively pure and fresh, but here was ceaseless noise and agitation, whilst the atmosphere was poisoned with the filthy smell of the crowd outside the door and in the courtyard under the window.

Although only three o'clock in the morning it was already suffocatingly hot in the airless cell when the Queen entered it for the first time. Several times she raised her handkerchief to wipe her forehead. It was then, whilst looking around her at the crowd of faces dimly illumined by the flickering torchlight—for a number of jailers and officials still remained there talking to each other in low voices—that her eyes fell on two women waiting silently to receive her. These were Mme Richard, the wife of the concierge, and the friend who acted as her servant, Rosalie Lamorlière.

M. Lenotre has pointed out that one must not place too much reliance on the accounts, given long afterwards, by the attendants in the Conciergerie of the humanity they had shown the royal prisoner. At the time of the Restoration, when pensions and decorations rained on those who could prove their loyalty, all were anxious to disassociate themselves from the barbarities of the revolutionary régime. Nevertheless there were exceptions to the general rule. Even in this inferno of the Conciergerie some human feeling lingered in hearts not dead to all pity, some noble souls were found shining like stars out of the blackness of the night.

Such a soul was Rosalie Lamorlière, the young cook at the Conciergerie, noted for her remarkable beauty. Though only a poor peasant girl, she was endowed with a delicacy and an artistic sense which the working women of France—and particularly of old France—have often displayed to a peculiar degree. It seems certain that Richard, the concierge, and his wife did all they could to mitigate the sufferings of the prisoners, and on hearing that the Queen was expected at the Conciergerie, Mme Richard tried to

relieve the wretchedness of her cell by supplying the finest linen she could find for her bed and a pillow on which to lay her head.<sup>1</sup> But it was Rosalie who entered most wholeheartedly into these arrangements, who fetched a footstool from her own room to supplement the meagre furniture, and who long afterwards told the story of those tragic days in language all the more striking for its simplicity.

Thus Rosalie relates that after the men had gone out and she and Mme Richard were left alone with the Queen, Marie Antoinette quietly prepared to go to bed. Standing on the footstool that Rosalie had provided, she hung her watch on to a nail she had perceived high up on the wall and began to undress. Rosalie respectfully asked whether she could help her.

‘I thank you, ma fille,’ the Queen answered without the least pride or ill-humour, ‘but since I have had no one to do it I have waited on myself.’

A waiting-woman, however, was provided by the prison in the person of old Mme Larivière, aged eighty, and it was she who patched the Queen’s poor black gown that was torn under the arms and frayed round the edges by friction with the rough stones of the floor. For on arrival at the Conciergerie Marie Antoinette had only the clothes she was wearing, and in the heat of the August weather she endured misery through being deprived even of a change of linen. Mme Richard, afraid of compromising herself, dared not lend her any, but Michonis, the same municipal officer who had plotted with the Baron de Batz to rescue the royal family, went to the Temple and managed to obtain permission for some of her clothes to be sent her from there. With what relief she opened the parcel that arrived ten days later! There in the darkness of her cell, this woman who had once set the fashion to all Europe, now clothed in rags, yet still scrupulous in her love of cleanliness, still exquisite in her tastes, turned over tenderly the fine chemises trimmed with Malines lace, the cambric handkerchiefs, the

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 174, 178.

muslin fichus, the silk stockings, the linen caps and lengths of ribbon which were the last she was ever to receive, and looking at Mme Richard and Rosalie, said with gentle emotion: 'By the care that has been taken over all this, I recognize the hand and the thoughtfulness of my poor sister Elisabeth.'

Beugnot has related how, during his captivity in the Conciergerie during the height of the Terror, the women prisoners still concerned themselves with their toilettes even under the shadow of the guillotine, washing their only garments in the fountain of the Cour des Femmes so as to present a fresh appearance to the last.

This same feeling of self-respect, which sustained Marie Antoinette throughout the whole of her captivity, provided her with the only means of occupying her hands. For the enforced idleness to which she was condemned caused her the greatest suffering of all. She had asked for her knitting to be sent her from the Temple so that she could finish the pair of stockings she was making for her little son, but though this was duly dispatched it never reached her. To a woman who, in her most prosperous days had always taken up her tapestry or embroidery at every odd moment, not to be allowed to work was the cruellest privation. Montjoie, who was often at the Conciergerie, relates that he managed to provide her with a few books, and it is said that she read the travels of Captain Cook—for she preferred stories of adventure, particularly hair-raising adventures, to any others—but most of the day she was obliged to remain in semi-darkness, doing nothing. For hours she would sit, as in a dream, trying to still the restlessness of those once busy fingers, by passing the diamond rings she still wore from one to another. 'I admired the beauty of her hands,' says Rosalie, 'their charm and whiteness was beyond anything one could describe.'

An Englishman, who succeeded in gaining admission to her cell, has left a tragic picture of the sight that met his eyes. He had been told that this permission would only be

given him on condition that he made no signs of compassion. 'The conditions being agreed to, he was led into the room in which the poor Queen was sitting, on an old worn-out chair made of straw, which scarcely supported her weight. Dressed in a gown which had once been white, her attitude bespoke the immensity of her grief, which appeared to have created a kind of stupor, that fortunately rendered her less sensible to the injuries and reproaches which a number of inhuman wretches were continually vomiting forth against her.' <sup>1</sup>

Much the same description was given by the Chevalier de Rougeville. This bizarre personage, immortalized by Alexandre Dumas under the name of the Chevalier de Maison Rouge, was an enthusiastic royalist, whose real name was Gonsse, and who had figured among the defenders of the royal family on the 20th of June and the 10th of August.

Rougeville, in co-operation with a group of royalists drawn from the ranks of the people, had elaborated a plot for getting the Queen out of the Conciergerie, and had made friends with Michonis, whom he succeeded in persuading to take him into her cell. Once there he was to convey a note to her, telling her of the plan, concealed amongst the petals of a carnation. In the account of this adventure that he gave afterwards to Fersen,<sup>2</sup> Rougeville said that on entering he found Marie Antoinette so changed that he hardly recognized her. The last time he had seen her, on the 10th of August at the Tuileries, she had appeared still young and beautiful, but now, although only thirty-seven, almost every trace of youth was gone, her cheeks were faded and hollow, her hair had whitened and she had grown so thin and weak that she seemed hardly able to stand. All that remained of her beauty was the fine outline of her features, the charm of her expression and her air of noble pride and gentle dignity.

<sup>1</sup> *The Journal and Correspondence of Lord Auckland* (1861), ii. 517.

<sup>2</sup> Klinckowstrom, *Le Comte de Fersen*, ii. 101.

Rougeville related that her cell was damp and foetid; the bed was covered with an old and dirty blanket full of holes, the sheets were now coarse and grey. At the window looking into the Cour des Femmes the criminals confined in that part of the prison collected all day to hurl insults at the Queen. The young woman, Mme Harel, who on the score of Mme Larivière's great age had now been brought in to attend on the Queen, was a sort of *poissarde* of whom she complained.

On seeing Michonis the Queen rose to her feet, saying: 'Ah, it is you, Monsieur Michonis!' and then, recognizing the Chevalier de Rougeville, was so overcome at the sight of this defender of the royal family, that she almost fell back into her chair, trembling in every limb. Her face grew crimson and tears fell from her eyes. She retained, however, enough presence of mind not to breathe his name or betray the cause of her emotion, and Rougeville, coming forward, tried to reassure her, holding out the bouquet of carnations—or, according to other accounts, one carnation—making a sign that something was concealed within it. But the Queen was too agitated to understand his meaning; Rougeville then dropped the bouquet behind the stove and went out with Michonis.

A little later both returned, and whilst Michonis engaged the attention of the two gendarmes, Dufresne and Gilbert, Rougeville succeeded in exchanging a few words with the Queen, behind the screen that surrounded her bed.

'I have arms and money,' he said, 'take courage.' And after explaining that he would provide her with the means for bribing the gendarmes, he asked: 'Does your heart fail you?'

'It never fails me,' answered Marie Antoinette, 'but it is deeply afflicted.' And placing her hand on her heart she added: 'If I am weak and downcast, this is not.'

Michonis fearing to prolong the interview then came forward and led Rougeville away. As soon as they had gone Marie Antoinette, now understanding the significance

of the carnations, and taking advantage of Mme Harel's attention being diverted to a game of cards she was playing with the gendarmes, picked up the bouquet from behind the stove and read the note concealed within it. The words it contained were vague and to this effect: 'What are you doing here? We have arms (bras) and money at your service; I will come on Friday.'

Tearing this into a thousand pieces, the Queen began to think how she was to reply and finally, having no pen or pencil, she succeeded in pricking a note with a pin on a small piece of paper. The words, which were so illegible that they were never deciphered until 1876, ran as follows.

'Je suis gardée à vue, je ne parle à personne. Je me fie à vous, je viendrai.'<sup>1</sup>

What happened after this is not very clear. According to the gendarme Gilbert the Queen took him into her confidence; at any rate she entrusted him with the note which he passed on to Mme Richard, who gave it to Michonis. On the appointed night of September 2 to 3, the conspirators returned to the Conciergerie. Michonis, acting on a pretended order of the municipality to conduct the Queen back to the Temple, was to lead her out of the Conciergerie and hand her over to Rougeville with whom she was to escape to a place of safety. The Richards had agreed to co-operate, the gendarmes had been bribed. But again at the last moment one of these changed his mind and threatened to give the alarm. So the great attempt failed; Gilbert and Mme Harel then denounced the plot. Rougeville fled the country, the Richards were removed and imprisoned for six months at the Madelonnettes. Michonis was taken to the Abbaye and finally guillotined on June 17, 1794, as an accomplice of Cécile Renault of whom he had never heard and who had planned an attempt on the life of Robespierre.

Montjoie observes that the whole scheme, henceforth to be known as the 'affaire de l'œillet,' had been badly

<sup>1</sup> An exact facsimile of this note, made with actual pin-pricks, is given by Charles d'Héricault in his book *La Révolution*, p. 198.

conceived and expresses the opinion that it would not have been difficult to work out an effectual plan of rescue. A determined band of men could have rushed the prison at night, since there were so many ways of entering it, and even the main entrance was not strongly guarded. Once inside it would only have been necessary to settle the turnkey of the Queen's cell and the two gendarmes on guard within. This, however, would probably have entailed killing them, and Montjoie goes on to say that such a plan was contemplated, but Marie Antoinette rejected the idea of this double assassination with horror.

According to Madame Royale several other attempts were made, and on one occasion the Queen had actually succeeded in escaping from her cell and had gone some way along the passage when she was stopped by a gendarme who, though bribed, refused to let her pass. But nothing is known about the authors of these plots.

It is also said that two heroic women, the Marquise de Forbin Janson on one occasion and an Englishwoman, Mrs. Atkyns, at the cost of a thousand louis on another, succeeded in penetrating into the Queen's cell and begged her to change clothes with them, offering to go to the scaffold in her place. But Marie Antoinette firmly refused to accept the sacrifice of their lives.

Montjoie explains that if no great concerted plan of rescue was made by men who could have carried the attempt through by force, it was because the Terror had already begun and espionage had been organized so effectively that it was impossible for any group of people to get together without almost the certainty of betrayal. 'The axe was suspended over all heads . . . everyone awaited his turn and no one felt himself safe in any refuge, whether in the depths of the woods or in the darkness of cellars, for denunciation was then encouraged, honoured and rewarded and the denouncers showed indefatigable activity.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 182.

The abortive 'affaire de l'œillet' had only made the Queen's position worse. On the 3rd of September three members of the Comité de Sûreté Générale—the second great committee of the Terror—arrived in her cell and put her through a long interrogatory on the matter, to which she replied with great presence of mind and prudence, compromising no one, and since nothing could be made of her pin-pricked note no grounds could be found for accusing her of conspiracy.

Nevertheless, from this time onwards she was treated with greater rigour. Her diamond rings and her watch, of which she was very fond because she had brought it with her, as a young Dauphine, from Vienna, were taken from her; luckily the commissaries did not discover her greatest treasure, a little locket containing the hair and portrait of the Dauphin which she wore round her neck wrapped in a little glove of canary-coloured leather that he had worn.

The concierge, Richard, was now replaced by a man of sterner stuff named Bault. Finally, on September 11, the Queen was moved from the Salle du Conseil to another cell still damper, drearier and more foetid, which served as the prison pharmacy.

This room, the one which is shown to tourists as 'le cachot de la Reine,' was very different then from what it is at the present day. According to M. Lenotre, the door with its heavy bolts and bars, so low that one has to crouch on passing through it, has been moved there from the neighbouring cell, the wall separating it from this has been removed, whilst the gap in the wall on the other side opening into the cell occupied by the gendarmes has been bricked up. The window has been enlarged.<sup>1</sup> Indeed M. Lenotre goes so far as to say that nothing remains of the original cell except the rough brick floor, over the dirt and damp of which Marie Antoinette's small feet passed so often, wearing out her satin shoes and the edge of her long black gown.

<sup>1</sup> *Paris Révolutionnaire* (1912), pp. 343, 359.



Nevertheless, with a very slight stretch of imagination, it is possible to reconstruct the scene as one stands in that place of horror, to see again the dingy walls trickling with damp when the Seine rose high, to picture the gloom, the squalor of the pestilential den in which the Queen of Versailles and the Trianon passed the last thirty-five days of her life. There beneath the barred window opening, like that of her first cell, into the Cour des Femmes, through which a dim light penetrated, her shabby armchair was placed with a small table in front of it, and there she would sit hour after hour hopeless, patient and resigned. Now that the rings she had amused herself slipping from one finger to another had been taken from her, there was nothing for it but to fold her hands in idleness. Sometimes so as to satisfy the craving to occupy them she would tear threads from a coarse hanging nailed on the wall and plait them into a fine braid pinned to her knee; the poor little garter thus woven was passed on to her daughter, who preserved it as a sacred relic.

What were her thoughts during those long empty days, those interminable evenings when, after the dim light had faded, she was left without lamp or candle, with only the faint glimmer of a distant lantern in the courtyard outside to relieve the obscurity of her cell? Did she dream of summer mornings in the gardens of the Petit Trianon, did she hear again the strains of dance music to which she had moved so lightly over the shining parquet of the Great Galerie des Glaces, did she see the pageant of those splendid days pass before her eyes and contrast it, agonizingly, with the gloomy squalor of her surroundings?

It seems, however, that the loss of her former magnificence was the thing that troubled her the least. One could recall to her mind, says Montjoie, the splendour of her birth, the pomp that had once surrounded her, she regretted nothing; one could weep for Louis XVI and she would say gently: 'He was never happy, but he is now, for all eternity.' But were one to mention her children she would tremble from

head to foot and fall into an agony of despair that lasted for hours.<sup>1</sup> Once inadvertently Mme Richard had brought her little boy with her into the Queen's former cell, and at the sight of his fair curls and blue eyes Marie Antoinette broke down completely, and taking him in her arms she kissed and wept over him talking about the Dauphin, of whom, says Rosalie, she thought night and day.

After the Queen had been removed to her second cell Rosalie became her most constant attendant. At first she had only been employed to bring in the meals she had prepared with great care, but now she found the opportunity to perform all kinds of small services for her; every morning she would brush the Queen's little black slippers that were coated with the damp mould of the brick floor. 'They were as dirty,' said Rosalie, 'as if the Queen had been walking in the Rue Saint Honoré.' Some of the royalist prisoners, seeing these in Rosalie's hand from behind the iron grille which separated them from the rest of the prison, begged to be allowed to hold them, and passing them from one to another covered them reverently with kisses.

But it was not the aristocrats alone who retained this respect for the Queen; 'her courageous resignation and her proud impassiveness,' says M. Lenotre, impressed the most boorish of her guardians and filled them with a sense of awkwardness and embarrassment in her presence.

Beugnot relates that whilst he was imprisoned at the Conciergerie he made the acquaintance of a young street-walker named Eglé who had been arrested for her royalist opinions. By way of insulting the Queen, Chaumette had proposed to send Eglé to death with her in the same tumbril. 'Then,' said Eglé, 'in the middle of the way [to the scaffold] I should have thrown myself at her feet and neither the executioner nor the devil would have got me up again.' The plan was not carried into execution, and when Eglé's turn came, 'she jumped into the tumbril with the lightness of a bird.'

Who, asks M. Lenotre, were the people most eager to

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 181.

save the Queen? 'A mudsweeper, a pastrycook, three wig-makers, a pork butcher, two charwomen, two masons, an old-clothes-man, a lemonade seller, a wine merchant, a locksmith and a tobacconist. . . .'

Once in the early days of her imprisonment the Queen had asked for a melon, and Mme Richard, going to a neighbouring market, said to one of the fruit-sellers: 'I want an excellent melon.'

'I understand you,' answered the woman, 'the melon you want so urgently is for our unhappy Queen,' and choosing the best on her stall she handed it to the wife of the concierge, who asked its price.

'Keep your money,' said the fruit-seller, 'and tell the Queen there are many of us who moan over her. . . .'

After the Richards had been removed, women of the market came to the Conciergerie bringing their best melons and peaches as presents to 'the good Queen.'

Mme Richard had sometimes brought her flowers, for which she had a passion—usually carnations or tuberoses of which the scent helped to counteract the stench of her prison—but after the 'affaire de l'œillet' this consolation was no longer allowed her.

As autumn set in, the heat from which the Queen had suffered on her arrival at the Conciergerie turned to cold, and she would sit shivering without fire or stove. It was Rosalie who then took away her nightgown to warm it in the kitchen and place it, heated through, upon her bed and who, now that the evenings were drawing in, would contrive to spin out the tasks she performed by the light of her torch, in order to shorten the hours during which the Queen was left in darkness. 'Alas!' said Rosalie long afterwards, 'I should have liked to serve her on my knees, but I had to appear to treat her with no more distinction than my mistress Mme Richard.'

But the Queen's sufferings were now nearing their end. One day, sitting at the window of her cell, she heard two prisoners talking, and one said to the other that on October 12 she was to be led before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

## CHAPTER XX

### LAST DAYS OF THE QUEEN

LIKE Louis XVI Marie Antoinette was to be given the semblance of a trial, not by the Convention but by the Tribunal that had been decreed on March 10, 1793, at the instigation of Danton, who was to perish by it. On October 3 the Convention passed the decree that 'the Revolutionary Tribunal should concern itself without delay or interruption with the judgement of the widow Capet.'

But where was any evidence to be found that would provide the smallest pretext for this further assassination? The documents in the famous *armoire de fer* contained hardly anything relating to the Queen. Besides these a quantity of her papers, forming several large dossiers, had been seized at the Tuileries on June 21, 1791, after the royal family had started for Montmédy. But here again was nothing that could be twisted into an accusation of any kind.

In vain had all the libels of the period been ransacked; nothing could be discovered that would provide the flimsiest evidence. In vain Héron, one of the vilest spies of the Comité de Sûreté Générale, had been put on to frame some charge that would have an appearance of plausibility, but he could think of nothing better than to declare that Marie Antoinette had co-operated with the Comte de Vaudreuil for a plan of general bankruptcy and for a massacre of citizens in the riot which took place at the house of the paper-maker, Réveillon, on April 18, 1789. But this was too grotesque even for the Comité de Sûreté Générale, and Héron was obliged to have recourse to Marat, whose disordered imagination might be depended on to

produce more lurid evidence. Marat, who saw immediately that Héron's report was a mere tissue of absurdities as it stood, then proceeded to draw it up into a diatribe calculated to impress the Comité. Héron was then ordered to hand over the papers on which he professed to have founded it for examination by Moïse Bayle, but as they existed only in his imagination, none were forthcoming, so no use could be made of the diatribe composed by Marat, who met his death soon after—on July 13, 1793—at the hands of Charlotte Corday.<sup>1</sup>

Thus by October no documentary evidence had been provided and on the 5th of that month Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Accuser, wrote in desperation to the Convention :

'Citizen President, I have the honour to inform the Convention that the decree issued by it on the 3rd of this month that the Revolutionary Tribunal should concern itself without delay or interruption with the judgement of the widow Capet was handed to me yesterday evening. But up till to-day no documents relating to Marie Antoinette have been transmitted to me, so that however desirous the Tribunal may be of executing the decrees of the Convention, it finds it impossible to execute this decree as long as it has not got these documents.'<sup>2</sup>

It was then that Hébert stepped into the breach with his horrible scheme of inducing the Dauphin to testify against his mother.

Jacques René Hébert, now a man of thirty-eight, had been employed in the box office of a theatre before the Revolution and also as a lackey. From 1789 onwards he had edited his revolutionary journal *Le Père Duchesne*, on the outside of which he was represented as a rough working-man trading in stoves with a heavy moustache and a pipe in his mouth, whilst the phraseology employed in his articles was that of the lowest rabble of Paris, interspersed with coarse oaths and obscenities. In reality Hébert was a small, clean-

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii 188-191.

<sup>2</sup> Émile Campardon, *Marie Antoinette à la Conciergerie* (1863), p. 63.

shaven young man wearing his hair well curled, and a carefully frilled jabot, speaking and writing French correctly, and particularly fond of the pleasures of the table. At the same time he was by temperament both a sentimentalist and a complete Anarchist, a sybarite and a Sadist maniac; his love of luxury was combined with an inordinate thirst for blood. Thus it is related that on the day Louis XVI was executed Hébert, who celebrated the event by the most sanguinary tirade in the *Père Duchesne*, dined at the house of Pache and suddenly burst into floods of tears, giving as an excuse for his emotion: 'The tyrant was very fond of my dog; he often caressed it.'<sup>1</sup>

But at a meeting of the Comité de Salut Public that took place in the night of September 2-3, 1793, it was Hébert who clamoured loudest for the death of the Queen.

No more terrible document has been preserved, from the bloody days of the Terror, than the account of this nocturnal sitting of the men here described as 'the Committee of Nine,' provided by Francis Drake, an agent of the British Government at Genoa, who, through a contact he had formed with the secretary of that Committee, was able to obtain reports of its most secret deliberations, which he passed on to the Foreign Minister, Lord Grenville.<sup>2</sup>

On this occasion, besides Hérault de Séchelles, Jean Bon Saint André, Barère and Cambon, members of the Committee, there were present Pache, now the mayor of Paris at whose house the meeting took place, who, with Hébert and Chaumette, formed 'the Triumvirate of the Commune.' During this night of madness wholesale executions were planned; all the Girondins were included in the proscription. Cambon suggested that it might be better to defer the judgement of the Queen since she could be used in negotiations with foreign Powers, but Hérault de Séchelles, Barère and Jean Bon Saint André rose in fury at the proposal,

<sup>1</sup> Ducheux et Roux, xxiii. 311.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical MSS. Commission, MSS. of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Droghmore* (known as the *Droghmore Papers*), published 1894, vol. ii. p. 459 and foll.

saying that to keep the Dauphin alive answered the same purpose, and that the blood of the Queen was necessary in order to associate the Convention more closely with the Revolutionary Tribunal. It was then that Hébert in a paroxysm of Sadist frenzy exclaimed:

‘I have promised the head of Antoinette; I will go and cut it off myself if you delay in giving it to me! I have promised it from you to the *sans-culottes* who ask for it perpetually and without whom you would cease to exist.’

Then he went on to rave, seeing suddenly before him a perspective of the abyss into which the Terror was to lead them:

‘I do not know whether any hope is left you of a Republic, of a Constitution, of saving yourselves, but I know that if any is left you are greatly mistaken. . . . We shall all perish and those who have figured as we have. . . . We live only by vengeance. It can be immense. In perishing, let us leave our enemies all the germs of their own death and in France so vast a destruction that the mark of it will never fade away. For that, you must satisfy the *sans-culottes*, they will kill all our enemies, but we must keep up their heat by the death of Antoinette—that is for them; the death of the Brissotins (Girondins) is for us . . . that is all I have to say. . . .’

With these words he went out, not wishing to debate another moment.

Fouquier was then sent for and told that he must draw up an accusation as best he could. But try as he might he could find no proof of immorality on the part of the Queen—the one charge that might be expected to fan the fury of the people, and especially of the women, against her.

For although the rabble of Paris had long been taught to hurl insults at Marie Antoinette, to call her Messalina, Agrippina and other names more intelligible to their minds, and to describe the Dauphin as ‘the fruit of her debaucheries,’ no attempt was made by her accusers to indicate the names of her lovers or to assign the paternity of her son to any of

these. Throughout all the discussions on the Dauphin, in the accounts of the interviews held with him, in the references made to him by the Convention, the Commune or the Comité de Salut Public he is always 'le petit Capet' or 'le fils du tyran,' nowhere is it suggested that he was not the son of Louis XVI. That foul calumny had emigrated with its first authors. And since the Queen had been imprisoned for fourteen months it was impossible to attribute any fresh lovers to her. No male being had remained near her except the Dauphin, and she was therefore to be accused of incest with her own little son.

This plot was the more diabolical on the part of Hébert since he had proved not insensible to the charming character of the young prince. In the preceding July, again at the house of Pache, he had spoken about his visits to the Temple, saying :

'I have seen the little child of the Tower. He is as beautiful as the day and as interesting as possible; he plays the King wonderfully. . . . He asked me the day before yesterday whether the people were still unhappy. "That is a great pity," he answered, after I had said yes.' <sup>1</sup>

This was the child whom Simon by order of the Commune had set out to corrupt by forcing him to repeat obscenities, to swear and to drink fiery liquors that he loathed to the point of nausea. According to one of Drake's reports they even went so far as to infect him deliberately with venereal disease in order to make the state of his health give colour to accusations against the Queen.<sup>2</sup>

It has become the fashion lately to rehabilitate Simon and represent him merely as a rough good-natured fellow. This theory has been taken up even by royalist writers whose object is to prove that the Dauphin was rescued from the Temple, presumably for the purpose of showing that he left his prison with his faculties unimpaired. But the fact that he was temporarily affected by his treatment at the hands

<sup>1</sup> Albert Mathiez, *La Conspiration de l'Étranger* (1918), p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 529.



of the cobbler Simon would not prevent him from recovering his senses and becoming normal in later life. A belief in the man's brutality does not therefore seem to me incompatible with the theory of survival. And in judging the character of Simon how can we get away from the evidence of contemporaries, not only of the Dauphin's sister, of royalists like Montjoie and Beaulieu, of Beauchesne, who heard the oral tradition and talked with the boy's jailers, but also of ardent revolutionaries like Mercier, Prudhomme and Harmand de la Meuse, who all speak with indignation of Simon's brutality and his efforts to corrupt the mind of the little prince? Thus Prudhomme says:

'They made a point of choosing as governor of the child Simon the coarsest and most dissolute of men. His orders were to accustom the Dauphin to speak of his mother with contempt. The plan of those who had confided his education to Simon was to brutalize the child and make him contract the most ignoble habits so as to keep up the hatred of the multitude for the royal family,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

It is Harmand de la Meuse, member of the Convention Nationale, who speaks of 'the atrocious barbarity with which this monster (Simon) carried out his functions and describes how he would call the child from his bed at night, crying: "Capet! Capet! come here that I may see you!" and when the boy obeyed would kick him brutally.' Harmand adds: 'This has already been written, but I record it because the commissaries [at the Temple] gave us an account of which the recollection makes me shudder every time I think of it.'<sup>2</sup>

What object could there have been in inventing such stories?

Mercier declares that the child became 'comme hêbété'—stupefied by the treatment he endured.<sup>3</sup> Nothing else indeed explains the horrible scene that took place when on October 6, Chaumette, Hébert, Pache and several others

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, v. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Anecdotes*, (1814), pp. 22, 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Nouveau Paris*, iii. 14.

arrived at the Temple and put him through an interrogatory in the course of which they afterwards declared that this child of only eight years old had made the required accusations against his mother. These were put down in writing, and the little prince under their orders appended a crazy signature to the document. Beauchesne declares that he had been previously doped with brandy, and indeed we have only to compare this scrawl, reproduced here beneath the normal signature of the Dauphin, to see that he was either intoxicated or in a state of stupor :

*Louis*

(Normal)

*Louis CHARLEAPOST*

On the following day Pache and Chaumette returned to the Temple, accompanied this time by David, and endeavoured to extract admissions from Madame Royale. 'Chaumette,' she wrote afterwards, 'questioned me on a thousand vile things of which they accused my mother; I replied with truth that it was not so but a false calumny, they insisted a great deal but I held to the negative, which was the truth.'

But the little boy mechanically repeated the words taught him, accusing not only his mother, but his aunt, the saintly Elisabeth, of the horrible crime imputed to them by the diseased minds of Hébert and his allies. When one remembers the letter written by Marie Antoinette to Mme de Tourzel in July 1789 (see ante, p. 61) in which she spoke of the Dauphin's greatest fault being his habit of repeating what he had heard said, and one of which he must be corrected, one can understand how readily he had learnt the words put into his mouth on this occasion.

It is true that four years had passed since the Queen

wrote those words and her 'corrections,' together with those of Mme de Tourzel, seem to have had effect, for during the first few weeks with Simon the Dauphin had held out manfully and refused to utter the vile phrases taught him by the cobbler. But by October his physique was weakened, and then, at eight years old, three months are an eternity, quite long enough to make his past life with his mother seem like a dream and the horrible present the only reality. Cowed and brutalized by Simon, fuddled with alcohol, bewildered by the strange men who plied him with questions that he probably did not understand, he only knew that he must answer in the way he had been told or it would be the worse for him. With all due respect to M. Lenotre who, as a 'survivalist,' maintains that throughout his second interrogatory the little prince was *compos mentis*, sitting in an armchair, swinging his legs and 'perfectly at his ease,'<sup>1</sup> it is impossible to accept the eminent historian's conclusions. For Daujon, whose report of the scene he quotes, after recording the assent given by the child to the accusation brought against the Queen and Madame Elisabeth, goes on to say: 'As for me, I could not regard this reply as coming from himself; I regarded it, together with his look of uneasiness . . . only as resulting from the fear of punishment and of the ill treatment with which they may have threatened him if he did not make it.'<sup>2</sup>

Daujon then did not gain the impression that he was at his ease. Moreover, it must be remembered that the only detailed report of what passed was the one drawn up by the inquisitors, and we have nothing but their word for it that he made the replies attributed to him. The only witness on the other side was Madame Royale, who in her very brief account of the scene does not say that he made any incriminating admissions, indeed she does not record a single word he said. Her evidence points to the conclusion that he was not normal, but either dazed with fright or alcohol, for he seems to have expressed no pleasure at seeing

<sup>1</sup> Lenotre, *Le Roi: Louis XVII* (1921), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

her again. On arrival in his room, she writes, 'I kissed my brother tenderly, but Simon tore him away from me.' At this he appears to have made no remonstrance nor does Madame Royale relate that he said anything to her, even at parting. That she gathered the impression that he was stupefied with drink is evident from the testimony of Mme de Tourzel, who can have heard the story only from Madame Royale herself, and who says in her *Mémoires*: 'At the end of this atrocious scene the unhappy one (*le malheureux*) began to get over his intoxication and going up to his sister, took her hand to kiss it; the horrible Simon, seeing this, grudged him the small consolation and carried him off on the spot.'<sup>1</sup>

After Madame Royale had been led away, Madame Elisabeth was brought into the room to listen to the child's replies; here then we have not even his sister's evidence as to what passed, but only that of the inquisitors who had come to extract confessions from him. According to their account, which must necessarily be accepted with caution, Madame Elisabeth, hearing him confirm the horrible accusation against herself and the Queen, cried out uncontrollably: 'Oh, the monster!' This seems improbable; at the same time it may be that the good princess, unable to know what had taken place or to realize the 'third degree' methods brought to bear on the little prince—for by this time the interrogatory had been going on for four hours—did give way to some expression of disgust and horror. She herself, when asked whether the accusation was true, cut short the enquiry with the indignant words:

'Such an infamy is too much beneath me and too far from me to be able to reply to it!'

But the inquisitors had got what they wanted—the paper bearing the signature scrawled by the trembling hand of the child, which they could now supply in response to Fouquier-Tinville's clamorous demands for documents to place before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ii. 318. Simon was guillotined on July 28, 1794.

At the same time the Queen's papers found in the Tuileries were again brought out from the national archives to provide some show of evidence.<sup>1</sup>

The so-called trial of the Queen was to be preceded by an interrogatory.

In the evening of October 12, she was led from her cell, through the stone corridors of the Conciergerie and up the narrow staircase to the hall occupied by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Dressed in her long black gown she took her place on a stool facing the President Hermann and that most sinister figure of the Terror, the Public Accuser—Fouquier-Tinville. Daylight had faded from the three high windows looking into the courtyard of the Conciergerie, and the hall was lit only by two candles placed on the recorder's table, throwing long shadows on the dark-blue tapestried walls once adorned with fleur-de-lis, but now covered with revolutionary trophies.

Then the interrogatory began, a series of insolent accusations devoid of sense and based on the vaguest speculations, of which the following will serve as examples:

'Not content with dilapidating in a frightful way the finances of France, the fruit of the people's sweat, by your pleasures and intrigues, in concert with infamous Ministers, you sent millions to the Emperor to be used against the people who nourished you.'

The Queen replied with dignity that she loved her husband too well to dilapidate the country's finances, and that her brother had no need of the money of France.

'It was you who taught Louis Capet that art of profound dissimulation with which for a long while he deceived the good French people who did not suspect that rascality and perfidy could be carried to such a point?'

'Yes,' came the answer, 'the people have been deceived, most cruelly, but not by my husband or myself.'

'You have never ceased for a moment wishing to destroy

<sup>1</sup> Wallon, *Histoire du Tribunal Révolutionnaire* (1873), i. 318.

liberty; you wanted to reign at any cost and reascend the throne on the corpses of patriots.'

'We had no need to reascend the throne; we were there already. We never desired anything but the happiness of France. . . .'

'Do you think kings are necessary for the happiness of the people?'

'An individual cannot decide that question.'

'No doubt you regret that your son has lost a throne to which he might have ascended if the people, at last enlightened on their rights, had not broken it down?'

'I shall never regret anything for my son if the people are happy.'

After these preliminaries the Queen was asked if she wished for counsel to defend her. She replied that she knew of no one; the Tribunal then designated Tronçon Ducoudray and Chauveau Lagarde as her counsels.

The fact that these two advocates were honest and right-minded men might seem to indicate some glimmering sense of fair play on the part of the Tribunal, but as the case was already prejudged and nothing they could say would influence the decisions of the court, the justice of the defence was not to be feared.

Chauveau Lagarde was in the country when he received the summons to act as the Queen's defender, and on the evening of October 13 he hurried to Paris and presented himself at the Conciergerie. After passing through the wicket-gates he was led down the dark corridor lit by a single lamp to the Queen's cell. Marie Antoinette, he wrote afterwards, 'received me with a majesty that was full of sweetness. . . .' In approaching her 'with a holy respect, my knees trembled under me . . . and I felt more embarrassed than if I had had the honour to be presented to the Queen in the midst of her Court.'

The *acte d'accusation* or statement of charges brought against Marie Antoinette, drawn up this same day by the Revolutionary Tribunal, had now been handed to her.

Chauveau Lagarde relates that he went through it with her, and adds: 'On reading this work of hell I alone was dumbfounded; the Queen, showing no agitation, made her comments.'

The document began by stating that 'after the example of the Messalinas, Brunehauts, Frédégondes and Médicis, formerly known as queens of France . . . Marie Antoinette, widow of Louis Capet, has throughout her stay in France, been the scourge and the bloodsucker of the French,' then it went on to recapitulate the principal charges brought against her:

That she had had political relations with the man known as the King of Bohemia and Hungary (her brother the Emperor), contrary to the interests of France.

That in concert with the King's brothers and the infamous and execrable Calonne, she had dilapidated the finances of France.

That she had sent millions to the Emperor in order to maintain the war against the Republic.

That she had kept up a criminal correspondence with foreign Powers.

That she had arranged the banquet of the bodyguard and the Régiment de Flandres on October 1, 1789, at which the tricolore cockade had been trampled underfoot and had 'shown immoderate joy with regard to what happened at this orgy.'

That she had had counter-revolutionary works printed and distributed in profusion, and had carried 'perfidy and dissimulation' to the point of publishing libels against herself in order to make foreign Powers think she was badly treated by the French.

That she had created a scarcity of bread in the first days of October 1789, proved by the fact that this scarcity had ceased after her arrival in Paris.

That she had held counter-revolutionary *conciliabules* in the Tuileries at dead of night.

That she had planned the flight to Varennes, which was

connived at by 'her favourite La Fayette,' and combined with him, after her return, to close the Tuileries gardens to people not provided with cards of admission.

That 'the massacre of the Champ de Mars' on July 17, 1791, had been planned in her *conciliabules* which were known as the Austrian Committee.

That she had tried to destroy the Constitution after its acceptance by Louis Capet and persuaded him to refuse his sanction to the decrees against the émigrés.

That in concert with the liberticide faction then in power (the Girondins!) she had had war declared on her brother the King of Bohemia and Hungary.

That she had communicated plans of campaign to foreign Powers.

That she had planned the horrible conspiracy of August 10, 1792, and kept the Swiss Guards under the influence of drink all night, that she herself had bitten the ball cartridges they were to use so as to make them more deadly, and had been present at a *conciliabule* held that night in which the plan of firing on the people had been formed.

Finally, after a torrent of abuse, came the horrible accusation of Hébert that she had been guilty of incest with the little Dauphin, which the child, under examination, was said to have confirmed.

To such straits were her enemies reduced in order to support their diatribes against her moral character! For although, as Montjoie observes, they clearly recognized the capital that could have been made out of the suggestion that her children were illegitimate they *dared not* accuse her of being an unfaithful wife.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the English contemporary John Adolphus points out 'the proof was not attempted' although, since 'there was hardly a courtier of figure or a traveller of consequence that was not ranked amongst her favourites,' it might have been supposed 'that some proof would in the course of the Revolution have come to light,'<sup>2</sup> yet the only favourite they could think of to

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Biographical Memoirs* (1799), i. 154.



mention was La Fayette—La Fayette who had been her jailer at the Tuileries, whom she had dreaded more than anyone before the flight to Varennes and whose overtures in August, 1792, she had repelled with the words: 'Better perish than be saved by La Fayette.'

Such then were the charges Marie Antoinette was called upon to answer when her public 'trial' began at nine o'clock in the morning of October 14.

With the proud and charming coquetterie that never deserted her to the end, she had taken great trouble over her toilette on this occasion, mending and arranging her poor black gown as best she could, carefully dressing her hair, making herself a widow's bonnet out of the linen cap edged with a little pleated border that she usually wore and swathing it round with black crêpe. Then, with head held high, she made her majestic entry before the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The ancient hall of Saint Louis, where the throne had once been placed and where in the old days the Parlement of Paris had held its sittings, was now cut in two by a balustrade leaving two-thirds of the space to be occupied by the public, always eager for sensation. Facing it was a long platform along which ran a table covered with papers and dispatch-boxes; behind this sat five men, pale and beetle-browed, in voluminous black cloaks, with high plumed hats surmounting their black hair and with the tricolore around their necks. These were Hermann the President, young, elegant, and an enthusiast for the 'system of depopulation' he was later to apply, and the four judges Coffinhal, Donzé-Verteuil, Maire Savary and Deliège.

In front of and below them, at a table by himself, was Fouquier-Tinville, his stoat-like features alert as he fixed his prey with the piercing glance of his cruel close-set black eyes. Beside him were Hébert and the jackals of the Terror—Amar, Voulland, Vadier and others. A jury of fifteen members occupied two high-backed benches on either side of the judges' table.

Marie Antoinette having taken her place in the small armchair provided for her facing the Tribunal, Fouquier opened the proceedings by reading out the *Acte d'Accusation*, of which the summary has already been given. When this was ended the witnesses who were to testify against the Queen were called. But as these witnesses were forty-one in number and the hearing of their 'evidence' took no less than twenty-nine hours, again only the gist of their accusations can be quoted here.

Nineteen out of the forty-one either stated they knew nothing about the case or that they had no accusation to make against the Queen. This reduces the number to twenty-two, whose charges may be summarized as follows:

Laurent Lecointre, member of the Convention, supported the accusation of complicity in the demonstrations of loyalty that had taken place during the banquets of the bodyguard on September 29 and October 1, 1789, though the Queen's rôle consisted merely in presenting the regiment with two flags and in walking round the table at one of the banquets with her family.

Two witnesses, Abraham Silly and Tavernier, had seen people coming and going at the Tuileries on the night of the flight to Varennes and observed La Fayette's movements with suspicion. Nothing was said by either about the Queen, except that she had been seen walking with her son at six o'clock in the evening.

Terrasson had seen her give a vindictive look as she entered the Château after the return from Varennes, which 'made him think at once that she would revenge herself, and sure enough there soon came the scene of the Champ de Mars' (the so-called massacre of July 17, 1791, when the royal family were strictly guarded at the Tuileries).

Roussillon also accused her of complicity in that affair and said he had found bottles under her bed in the Tuileries on the 10th of August which showed she had plied the Swiss with drink.

Cointre accused her of having false assignats fabricated.

Lebenette said that three people had come to murder him on behalf of the Queen.

Simon, the cobbler, said that whilst at the Temple the royal family knew all that was going on in Paris, and Mathey, concierge at the Temple, said they had been seen talking to some of the municipal officers, including Jobert, who had shown them some wax medals, one of which had been dropped and broken by *la fille Capet*.

At this the Queen quietly observed that the medal in question represented Voltaire.

Throughout all this she maintained her presence of mind, answering with patience, dignity, even with spirit. Thus when accused of signing a bond for 80,000 francs on the 10th of August 1792, she said: 'I have never signed any bonds. And above all how could I have signed one on the 10th of August when we went to the Assembly at eight o'clock in the morning?'

This question elicited no reply. Indeed throughout the hearing of the witnesses no attempt was made to support or even to follow up any of their charges. The whole thing would have been farcical if it had not been so tragic.

As to evidence in the matter of treachery to France or of intrigues with foreign Powers, nothing was produced. One witness—Roussillon, who reported he had found bottles under the Queen's bed—added, without advancing any proof, that she had sent large sums to her brother the Emperor, and this was confirmed by the testimony of a housemaid who said she had heard from the Comte, meaning apparently the Duc de Coigny, that these sums amounted to 200 millions.

The Queen listened unmoved to these inanities. 'Throughout her interrogatory,' says the official report, 'Marie Antoinette almost always maintained a calm and assured countenance, moving her fingers on the arms of her chair with an absent-minded air as if she was playing the piano.'

Only once did she appear deeply moved; this was during the first day's sitting when Hébert, after denouncing 'a

counter-revolutionary sign' found in her possession—a heart pierced with an arrow bearing the words *Jesu, miserere nobis*—went on to launch his accusation with regard to the Dauphin.

At first the Queen ignored this, regarding it as beneath her to reply and merely casting a contemptuous glance at Hébert, but on being pressed by the President, rose from her chair and, turning with deep emotion to the audience, made her immortal apostrophe:

'If I did not reply, it was because Nature refuses to answer such an inculpation made to a mother. I appeal to all those mothers who may be found here——' Then for the first time tears fell from her eyes.

Although care had been taken to pack the hall with women of the most ferocious kind, 'furies of the guillotine,' some human feeling stirred in their withered hearts, some sudden flame of resentment at the insult offered to motherhood; a low murmur of pity and indignation ran through their ranks striking terror into the judges, who trembled lest the people should now rise in the Queen's defence. The sensation created was such that proceedings were held up for several minutes.

The panic spread as far as the Convention. The evening after the 'trial,' Vilate, a member of the jury, dining in a secret room at Venua's with Barère, Robespierre and Saint-Just, described the scene which had taken place and the Queen's reply, which he gave in the words: 'I appeal to all mothers present and to their consciences to declare whether there is one who does not shudder at such horrors.' Vilate goes on to say: 'Robespierre, struck by this answer, as by an electric shock, broke his plate with his fork, exclaiming: "That imbecile Hébert! As if it were not enough that she should be a Messalina, but he must make her out to be an Agrippina also, and provide her at her last moment with this triumph of public sympathy!" Everyone appeared stupefied.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vilate, *Causes Secrètes de la Révolution in Mémoires sur les Journées Révolutionnaires* par M. de Lescure (1875), i. 222.

Even the revolutionary journalists were outraged at the infamy that had been committed. 'A week after the Queen's trial,' says Prudhomme, 'I said to that monster Hébert: "You must be a great scoundrel to have accused her of so horrible a crime!" He answered: "Having noticed from the beginning of the trial that the public seemed to take an interest in this woman, and for fear she should escape us, I at once drew up my denunciation and passed it to the President, in order to set the multitude against her."'

Hébert was overestimating his own cleverness, the accusation was no sudden and brilliant inspiration on his part, but had been carefully thought out beforehand and, as we have seen, included in Fouquier's statement of charges; the onus must therefore rest on the whole of the Tribunal, desperate to substantiate their imputations on the moral character of the Queen.

For not only had they themselves failed to discover one lover who could, with any show of plausibility, be introduced into the case, but none of the forty-one witnesses called had so much as touched on this question. When one considers the hundreds of people still in Paris who had been employed at Versailles, the Tuileries and Saint-Cloud who would have been well rewarded for giving evidence against her, it is most significant that not a single one came forward with some such an accusation as: 'I saw the Duc de Coigny leaving her room,' or 'She used to have rendezvous with the Comte de Fersen in the garden of the Petit Trianon.' But nothing of this kind was attempted, although the name of Fersen had actually come up at the 'trial.' And in what connection? During the enquiries put to the Queen about the flight to Varennes the following dialogue had taken place:

*Q.* Who provided you, or had you provided, with the famous carriage in which you set out with your family?

*A.* It was a foreigner.

*Q.* Of what nation?

*A.* Swedish.

Q. Was it not Fersen, who lived in Paris, rue du Bac?

A. Yes.

Now, if ever, was the moment to ask: 'Was he not your lover?' and set all the women in the court in a ferment of indignation against the Queen. But no such idea seems to have occurred to the Tribunal, which passed on quietly to the next question:

'Why did you travel under the name of a Russian Baroness?'

Moreover, in the revolutionary report of the 'trial,' printed at the time, from which I quote, an asterisk leads from the name of Fersen to a footnote, where again one might expect to find 'The Queen's lover.' But what does it say? 'Colonel of the regiment of the heretofore Royal Suédois.'<sup>1</sup> That was how the Queen's bitterest enemies described the man whom Mlle Söderhjelm declares 'all Europe regarded as her lover!'

That this report was unlikely to show indulgence to Marie Antoinette may be judged by the fact that it is prefaced by an Introduction beginning with these words: 'A monster was born at Vienna in Austria on November 2, 1755. It issued from the flanks of another monster, savage and sanguinary, which breathed only murder and carnage and whose favourite aliment was blood.'

Thus, as the contemporary English writer, William Playfair, observed: 'Neither offers of reward, nor threats of vengeance, had been able to secure one single proof of criminality or vice against the widow of the unfortunate King.'<sup>2</sup> Not one of the forty-one witnesses brought forward cast the faintest slur upon her moral character.

Apart from their evidence, numerous questions were put to the Queen by the Tribunal relating to other matters, the money spent on the Polignacs, on the Petit Trianon which she did not attempt to deny—perhaps large sums had been spent, more than she wished; we know now that they were by no means fabulous.

<sup>1</sup> *Procès Criminel de Marie Antoinette* . . . Paris, An ii. p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Jacobinism*, p. 584.

Amongst the witnesses who did not testify against her was Manuel, whom she had feared beyond everyone, and who stoutly refused to incriminate her. The Comte d'Estaing, after saying that he had a personal grievance against her, declared that he could not take part in the charges brought forward. Asked what he had heard her say at the Château on the night of the 5th of October, he answered:

'I heard councillors of the Court tell the accused that the people of Paris were coming to murder her and that she must get away, to which she replied with great courage (avec un grand caractère): "If the Parisians come here to assassinate me, it shall be at the feet of my husband; but I will not fly."'

At this Marie Antoinette said:

'That is true. They wished me to go alone because they said that only I was in danger. I made the reply of which the witness speaks.'

The Comte de la Tour du Pin, former Minister of War, and a Liberal deputy of the Constituent Assembly, was called as a witness, and on being asked: 'Do you know the accused?' bowed deeply, saying in a tone of sorrowful respect: 'Ah, yes, I have the honour to know Madame,' and went on to testify in her favour. His cousin, the Marquis de la Tour du Pin Gouvernet, declined to take any part in the *Acte d'Accusation*. These two witnesses, together with the Comte d'Estaing, were all guillotined on the same day, April 28, 1794.

The same fate awaited Bailly, the former mayor of Paris and prime mover in the famous Oath of the Tennis Court, who had the courage to declare the accusations brought against the Queen, with regard to the Dauphin and the 'massacre of the Champ de Mars,' to be absolutely false. Bailly was dragged to the scaffold only a few weeks later, on November 11, 1793, and died with great courage under circumstances of extraordinary brutality.

Throughout the whole of the trial the Queen maintained

her patience and courage, and except in the case of Hébert's accusation betrayed no emotion. When the things that had been taken from her at the Temple were placed before her for explanation, beginning with the packet of hair, the Queen answered quietly:

'It is the hair of my children, dead and living, and that of my husband.'

Another packet was produced.

'It belongs to the same individuals.'

Even at the sight of these pathetic relics she did not weaken. Not once did she lose self-control. 'Did I show too much dignity?' she asked Chauveau Lagarde between the sittings.

'Madame,' he replied, 'be always yourself and you will be all right. But why this question?'

'Because I heard a woman of the people say to her neighbour: "See how proud she is!"'

In vain her enemies had tried to break her spirit by physical fatigue, and when one considers her weakened condition it is amazing that they did not succeed. For the sittings of the Tribunal lasted two whole days and far into the night—from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. on the 14th, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 5 p.m. on the 15th until 4 a.m. on the 16th. The last sitting thus continued for eleven hours at a stretch. Throughout the sittings the Queen took no nourishment; only once she murmured: 'I am thirsty,' and a compassionate gendarme named de Busne fetched her a glass of water. This same man offered her his arm when descending some dark steps leading back to her cell because, faint with exhaustion and unable with her short-sighted eyes to pierce the gloom, she had said: 'I cannot see my way, I can go no further.' De Busne was afterwards obliged to justify himself for these two actions as if they had been crimes.<sup>1</sup>

But for this momentary weakness Marie Antoinette maintained her dignity and even her good humour through-

<sup>1</sup> Montjoie, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, ii. 218, 237.



out, answering the questions put to her with a ready wit. If in her prison cell she had seemed to sink into a kind of stupor, the sudden reappearance in public and the necessity for bringing all her faculties into play appear to have restored her mental energy and even something of that liveliness which had formerly characterized her conversation. And as witness followed witness, either refusing to testify against her or making accusations so futile that she could hardly restrain a pitying smile, a sensation of relief came over her, hope began to glow in her heart—if this was all they could find to say, surely she need have no fear? One detects almost a note of triumph in her voice when, after all the evidence had been heard, she exclaimed :

‘Yesterday I did not know the witnesses ; I was not aware of what they were going to bring against me. Well, no one has charged me with a single positive fact !’

This was so true that many people thought she must be acquitted ; during the interval in the afternoon of the 15th several of the royalists who had mingled in disguise with the crowd went off and said joyfully to their friends : ‘The Queen will be deported !’ And a market woman, leaving the hall with tears in her eyes, cried out to the crowd outside : ‘Marie Antoinette will get off, she has answered like an angel !’

After the speeches made by her official defenders, the Queen was led out of the Tribunal and Hermann then proceeded to sum up the case. His speech consisted in a mere reiteration of the charges brought by the witnesses without any attempt to substantiate them. The infamous accusation of Hébert was significantly omitted. Four questions were now put to the jury :

1. Is it an established fact that manœuvres and understandings went on with foreign Powers and other external enemies of the Republic . . . tending to help them with money, to give them the entry to French territory and to facilitate the progress of their arms?

2. Is Marie Antoinette of Austria, widow of Louis Capet,

convicted of having co-operated with these manœuvres and to have kept up these understandings?

3. Is it an established fact that there was a plot and conspiracy tending to start civil war in the interior of the Republic?

4. Is Marie Antoinette of Austria, widow of Louis Capet, convicted of having participated in this plot and conspiracy?

The jury, knowing what was required of them, answered 'Yes' to all four questions.

Thus without a shred of evidence having been produced the Queen was to be condemned. Even Prudhomme, the savage enemy of the King, had protested against such a gross miscarriage of justice. In his *Révolutions de Paris* he had written :

'There exists no act, no letter, which directly compromises her. Despise her, hate her if you like, but let us be just. Since no crimes have been proved against her or her sister (Madame Elisabeth) . . . there is no law that can be applied to them, and in so far as the death of Capet was just, that of his wife and sister would be iniquitous.'

To-day we know even better than contemporaries how baseless were the charges brought against her. For, although the accusation of co-operating with the enemies of the Republic at home or abroad and of sending them money is seen on the face of it to be absurd since the Republic was not proclaimed until after the royal family were imprisoned at the Temple and had no means of communication or money at their disposal, and although no proof of treachery to France before the 10th of August had been advanced, it could not be known what the Queen had said in her private correspondence. Only since this has been given us in her letters to Mercy and in her most secret communications to Fersen, published in 1877, have we been able to realize how resolutely she had opposed all idea of civil war, all aggressive designs by the émigrés, how she had incurred the wrath of Gustavus III and the reproaches of Fersen for rejecting the plan of intervention by force, and preferring her idea of

moral pressure to be brought to bear by a Congress of the Powers, stipulating that they should not interfere in the internal affairs of France. Only when the lives of the royal family were in hourly danger and the country had been thrown into a state of complete anarchy had she prayed for deliverance by the troops of her own people, but never with a thought contrary to the interests of France. All this her published correspondence with Fersen has made perfectly clear.

The jury having pronounced its iniquitous verdict, Marie Antoinette was led back to the Tribunal to hear it announced. The President Hermann then passed sentence of death.

The Queen appeared to be stunned with surprise. Answering not a word, without a sign or gesture of fear or indignation she descended from the platform and walked through the hall, as if seeing and hearing nothing; only as she passed the crowd at the entrance she 'threw up her head with majesty.'

It was now half-past four in the morning of October 16; the Queen was to die the same day. According to some accounts she was not led back to her cell, but spent the terrible intervening hours in the dark alcove opening out of the long stone passage, which can still be seen, with its worm-eaten seat on which countless women victims of the Terror sat through their last night on earth. But this is contradicted by several witnesses, notably Rosalie Lamorlière and the concierge Bault, who were both with her in her cell.

It was there she wrote the wonderful letter to Madame Elisabeth which has been preserved amongst the sacred relics of the martyred Queen:

'It is to you, my sister, that I write for the last time. I have just been condemned, not to a shameful death, it is only so for criminals, but to go and rejoin your brother; innocent like him, I hope to show the same courage as he did in his last moments. I am calm, as one is when one's conscience reproaches one with nothing. I feel deep regret at leaving my poor children, you know I lived only for them

and you, my good and fond sister, you who, through your friendship, have sacrificed everything to be with us. In what a position I leave you! [Here a tear has fallen on the page.] I heard through the counsel's speech at the trial that my daughter had been separated from you. Alas, poor child, I dare not write to her, she would not get my letter. I do not even know whether this will reach you. Receive for both of them my blessing, I hope one day when they are older they will be able to join you and fully enjoy your tender care. May they both think of what I have never ceased to inspire in them: that principles and the exact performance of one's duties are the main foundation of life, that their friendship and mutual confidence will make their happiness. . . .

'May my son never forget the last words of his father, which I expressly repeat, that he shall never seek to avenge our death. I have to speak to you of a matter that is very painful to my heart. I know how much this child must have hurt you. Forgive him, my dear sister, think what his age is and how easy it is to make a child say what one wants and even what he does not understand. The day will come, I hope, when he will feel all the more the full value of your kindness and your fondness for them both. I have still to confide my last thoughts to you. . . .

'I die in the Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion, in that of my fathers, in which I was brought up and which I have always professed, having no spiritual consolation to expect, not knowing whether any priests of that religion still exist here, even the place where I am would expose them to too much danger were they to enter it once. I sincerely ask pardon of God for all the faults I may have committed throughout my existence. I hope that in His goodness He will deign to receive my last wishes as also those I have long since made that He may in His goodness and mercy receive my soul. I ask forgiveness from all those I know and from you, my sister, in particular, for all the pain I may have caused them without meaning it. I pardon

all my enemies the wrong they have done me. I here say adieu to my aunts, to all my brothers and sisters. I had friends, the thought of being separated from them for ever and their grief is one of the greatest regrets I carry away with me in dying, let them know at least that I thought of them until my last moment.

'Adieu, my good and fond sister, may this letter reach you, always think of me, I kiss you with my whole heart as also those poor dear children [here another tear has fallen on the page], my God! how heartrending it is to leave them for ever. Adieu, adieu, I must now concern myself only with my spiritual duties.'<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that although in this letter the Queen spoke of being without spiritual consolation and of the danger in introducing a confessor to her cell, a non-juring priest, the Abbé Magnin, had succeeded in penetrating there a few days earlier and had administered the last sacraments to her. If so, it can only have been for fear of compromising him that she omitted all mention of this in writing to Madame Elisabeth. In a postscript she adds that a priest, evidently a 'constitutional' one, will probably be brought to her, but that she will have nothing to say to him.

If Marie Antoinette had never in her life done anything else to prove her strength of character, this letter alone would have sufficed. That after two days' questioning by the Revolutionary Tribunal, at the end of a sitting that had lasted eleven hours, without food to sustain her and a ghastly death awaiting her in a few hours, she could now, at four o'clock in the morning of the chill October day, sit down and write a letter of this length in apparently perfect tranquillity of mind was a triumph of the spirit over the flesh that has perhaps never been surpassed. For the writing is as clear and firm as any belonging to the days of her prosperity, not once does her hand seem to have trembled

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in photostat by Charles d'Héricault, *La Révolution* (1883), p 204.

nor, except for the tears that fell here and there upon the pages, does she appear to have given way to grief. Her mind is clear and composed, she can think out axioms for her children's guidance, send messages to her friends and relations; nothing is forgotten.

The letter never reached Madame Elisabeth, but was seized by Fouquier-Tinville and only discovered amongst Robespierre's papers after his death on the 10th of Thermidor.

One other relic of that tragic morning has been preserved, a little prayer-book belonging to the Queen, on a page of which she had written:

'October 16, at half-past four in the morning.—My God, have pity on me! My eyes have no more tears to weep for you, my poor children! Adieu, adieu! Marie Antoinette.'<sup>1</sup>

This writing too is large and firm, showing supreme strength of mind.

Her last task on earth completed, the Queen, shivering with cold, threw herself on her bed and, wrapping her feet in a blanket, slept peacefully for several hours.

It was there that Rosalie came to her as dawn was breaking. The poor woman, hearing at four o'clock in the morning that the Queen was condemned, had fled to her own room to stifle her sobs and cries. At seven o'clock she went down to the Queen's cell to see whether she needed any food, and by the light of two candles saw her lying in her black dress on her bed with her head resting on her hand.

'Madame,' said Rosalie, trembling with emotion, 'you took nothing yesterday evening and hardly anything all day. What will you take this morning?'

At these words of compassion the Queen's iron self-control broke down and bursting into tears she said:

'My child, I have no need of anything. All is over for me.'

<sup>1</sup> This prayer-book is preserved in the library at Châlons-sur-Marne.

'Madame,' pleaded Rosalie, 'I have kept some soup and vermicelli on my stove; you have need to keep up your strength, let me bring you something.'

Then so as not to wound the girl's feelings, Marie Antoinette, weeping bitterly, said:

'Rosalie, bring me the soup.'

The bowl was brought, but the Queen could only swallow a few mouthfuls.

At eight o'clock Rosalie returned to help her dress. Wishing to put on a clean chemise the Queen retired behind her bed to be out of sight of the gendarme on guard in the cell. But the man persisted in following her.

The Queen then, drawing her fichu across her shoulders, said gently:

'In the name of decency, monsieur, allow me to change my linen unobserved.'

'I cannot consent,' the gendarme said insolently, 'my orders are that I should keep an eye on all your movements.'

The Queen sighed and slipped on her clothes with dexterous modesty.

On this day she did not wear her black widow's dress, which she had been told by her guardians would provoke insults against her husband from the crowd, so, putting on the only other gown she possessed, her white *déshabillé*, she drew round her neck her wide muslin fichu and crossed it over her breast. On her head she placed a simple cap of white linen without the lappets and crêpe band that she had worn at the Tribunal.

Rosalie then left her without daring to say good-bye or show her any mark of respect, for fear of compromising her. 'I went to weep in my room,' she said afterwards, 'and to pray God for her.'

It was then, says Mercier, whilst waiting for the dread moment to arrive, that the Queen said to the gendarmes who were separated from her only by a screen: 'Do you think that the people will let me go to the scaffold without tearing me to pieces?'

One of the men replied: 'You will reach the scaffold, Madame, without any harm being done to you.'<sup>1</sup>

At ten o'clock the turnkey Larivière entered the cell.

'Larivière,' said the Queen, 'you know that I am to die? Tell your good mother that I thank her for her care and that I ask her to pray to God for me.'

Then kneeling down beside her pallet bed she said her last prayers. Whilst she was still on her knees the four judges and recorder of the Tribunal came to read her sentence to her, and contrary to their usual custom removed their hats; 'I thought,' said Larivière, 'that they seemed overcome with respect by the majestic air of the Queen.'

Marie Antoinette observed that she had heard the sentence, but the recorder insisted on reading it over again.

The executioner, Henri Sanson, a man of immense height, then entered and going up to the Queen, said:

'Hold out your hands.'

At this Marie Antoinette, startled, drew back two paces and said in a broken voice: 'Are my hands to be tied? Those of Louis XVI were not.'

But the judges said to Sanson:

'Do your duty.'

'Oh! my God!!!' cried the Queen in a sudden frenzy of horror.

Then Sanson, brutally seizing those beautiful white hands, tied them so tightly behind her back that they turned purple. The Queen sighed deeply and raised her eyes to Heaven, keeping back the tears that were about to fall.

The executioner now proceeded to cut off her hair. Marie Antoinette, feeling his rough hands laid on her, thought for a moment he was about to kill her on the spot and turned round in great agitation, but seeing his purpose, allowed him without further resistance to remove her cap and shear away those once fair locks that had been the admiration of all Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Mercier, *Le Nouveau Paris*, iii. 15.



Larivière, standing by and watching this dreadful scene, afterwards expressed his feelings in words that by their very brevity, strike a chill to the heart:

'That is what I saw; that is what I wish I had never seen; that is what I shall never forget all my life (*Voilà ce que j'ai vu; voilà ce que je voudrais n'avoir jamais vu; voilà ce que je n'oublierai de ma vie*).'

Now the Queen was led out of her cell and along the stone corridor through the wicket-gates to the courtyard of the Conciergerie. Behind her walked Sanson holding the long ends of the cord that bound her arms. A wretched cart was waiting, drawn by a gaunt white horse; inside it, above the dirty boards, a plank was placed. As the Queen was about to enter it the 'constitutional' priest Girard, who had been sent to accompany her, said:

'Now, Madame, is the moment to arm yourself with courage.'

'With courage?' Marie Antoinette answered spiritedly; 'it is so long that I have been trained to it that it need not be supposed I shall be wanting in it to-day.'

And she mounted lightly up the steps, followed by Sanson, his assistant and the priest Girard. She had been about to take her place on the seat facing the horse, but the executioners ordered her to sit with her back to it. Then the cart moved slowly out of the court of the Conciergerie and passed between the serried crowds that lined the route to the Place de la Révolution.

It was thus that the artist David, stationed at a window, was able to make his sketch of the Queen on her last journey which has often been reproduced, but which, it must never be forgotten, is a caricature, intended as a parting insult to fallen greatness by one who raged at his own inferiority. We prefer to see the Queen in her last moments through the eyes of George Cain, the artist who executed the picture here reproduced, in which, though not contemporary, the scene has been carefully reconstructed with historical accuracy and probably conveys a truer impression than that

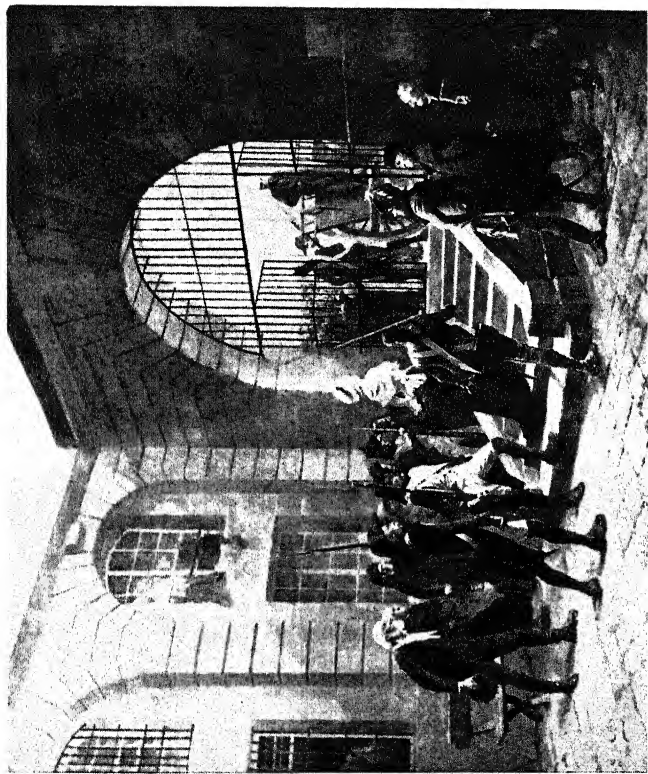


Photo : Archives Photographiques

MARIE ANTOINETTE PARTANT POUR L'ÉCHAFAUD  
*from the Painting by Georges Cain, Conservateur of the Musée Carnavalet.*



produced by the venomous pencil of David.<sup>1</sup> That his is not correct is shown by the evidence of Rosalie and of the Vicomte Charles Desfossés who took notes of her dress on her way to the scaffold: both assert that she wore a muslin fichu which David has left out, presumably in order to make her bare neck appear more unsightly. The other picture conforms in every particular with the description given by these two eye-witnesses, except that the skirt appears perhaps too dark. Desfossés says she wore a black skirt which could be seen through the white *déshabillé* mentioned by Rosalie. He also speaks of the touch of black on her cap, omitted in the sketch of David.

Throughout the hour's drive to the scaffold Marie Antoinette maintained the same attitude of calm dignity. Her face was deadly white but for a faint flush on either cheekbone, her eyes were dry but reddened by fatigue and want of sleep; she held her head high and looked with apparent indifference at the double row of soldiers bordering the route and at the silent crowds beyond them. For on this day, though Paris had turned out to see the spectacle and every window was filled with heads, no demonstrations took place, no cries or insults were uttered until the Rue St. Honoré was reached. Then a handful of women with dishevelled hair and eyes inflamed by drink and blood lust gave vent to howls of rage.

The Queen appeared unmoved by these imprecations; only once her sang-froid deserted her; this was when, opposite the Oratory in the Rue St. Honoré, a small child in its mother's arms blew a kiss to her. Then at this last appeal to the dominating passion of her life—her love of children and of her own children in particular—the proud Austrian lip quivered and tears fell from her eyes.

<sup>1</sup> The English contemporary Redhead Yorke thus describes David's own appearance: 'With a hideous wen upon his lip, which shows his teeth and for ever marks him with the snarling grin of a tiger—with features and eyes which denote a lust for massacre, he is a savage by instinct and an assassin by rule. He is an atheist in faith and practice, and a murderer by choice.'—*France in 1902*, p. 127.

By the side of the cart rode the actor Grammont, a former hireling of the Duc d'Orléans, who had taken part in the massacres at Orléans and boasted of having drunk out of the skull of one of his victims. Rising in his stirrups and brandishing his sword, he cried out to the crowd: 'La voilà, l'infame Antoinette, elle est f . . . , mes amis!'

But the long Calvary was nearing its end. The cart turned into the Rue Royale and, passing now again through silent rows of spectators, reached the Place de la Révolution. On the left side of the statue of Liberty where now the obelisk stands, facing the entrance gates of the Tuileries, the guillotine had been erected. The cart drew up at the foot of the scaffold, Marie Antoinette descended lightly and without help, although her hands were tied behind her; then with a tranquil countenance she mounted the steps hastily, fell on her knees and, after a moment's silence, said in a firm voice, loud enough to be heard by those around her: 'Lord, enlighten and touch my executioners; good-bye, my children, I go to rejoin your father.'<sup>1</sup> Then after lifting her eyes to heaven, without attempting to address the crowd, she allowed herself to be tied to the fatal plank. A moment later that noble head had been severed from the neck of marble which had borne it with such proud grace before the admiring eyes of Europe.

So ended the physical life of Marie Antoinette. But although her murderers, denying her even the honour of a tomb and consigning her mangled body to a bed of quicklime, hoped to obliterate every trace of her existence, she has lived on eternally in the minds of men.

As M. Pierre de Nolhac has expressed it:

'The Queen! For the French the words designate only one, the most brilliant and the most unfortunate, the Queen of the Trianon and also of the Temple. . . .'

Hence it is this Queen whom the enemies of monarchy have ever since endeavoured to blacken with their calumnies.

<sup>1</sup> Quintin Craufurd, *Notices sur Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse et sur Marie Antoinette, Reine de France* (1819), p. 58.

M. 'Louis Dasté' spoke only the truth when in 1910 he wrote that Marie Antoinette, who died 117 years ago, must be killed again and again by the agents of the Occult Power, whose object has been throughout to corrupt the French nation to the marrow of its bones and who have never ceased to pursue her with pornographic libels, doubtless because they were afraid of the traditions represented by the Queen being resuscitated.<sup>1</sup>

But they have not killed her memory! Still her very name casts a stronger spell over the imagination of posterity than that of any queen in history; still the vision of that noble and gracious woman—so much a woman with her charm and lightness, so much a queen in her splendid dignity and courage—triumphs over all efforts to defame and degrade her. Not until the conspiracy that overthrew the monarchy of France has achieved its purpose everywhere will the memory of Marie Antoinette be buried beneath the ruin of all thrones and the wreckage of all civilization.

<sup>1</sup> *Marie Antoinette et le Complot Maçonique* (1910), p. 183.

## CHAPTER XXI

### CONCLUSION

THE news of the Queen's murder came as a thunderbolt to her friends at home and abroad. Mme de Tourzel was so overcome that she feared she would go mad with horror. Mme de Polignac, who had just arrived in Vienna, died of grief.

The Comtesse d'Ossun, the Queen's former lady of the bedchamber, who had refused to emigrate and had stayed on in France in case her royal mistress might have need of her, paid for her devotion with her head and mounted the scaffold with sublime courage on the 8th of Thermidor, the day before the fall of Robespierre. The Maréchale de Mouchy, formerly the Comtesse de Noailles, lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette whom, as Dauphine, she had laughingly nicknamed 'Mme L'Étiquette,' had perished a month earlier, on June 27, with her husband the fine old Maréchal, aged seventy-nine, who said with his last breath: 'À seize ans je suis monté à l'assaut pour mon Roi; à quatre vingts je monte sur l'échafaud pour mon Dieu; je ne suis pas à plaindre.'

In London the royalist journalist Peltier, in whose salon the émigrés had met to mourn over the death of the King, now wrote frantically to Mrs. Atkyns:

'I no longer exist. I can see your grief from here; it doubles mine. Rage is killing me. . . . I am in despair, I know not what I am doing, what I am saying, what I am writing. Ah! my God, what barbarity, what horror!'

Fersen's reaction to the terrible news is curious. According to the extracts from his Journal and correspondence published by Mlle Söderhjelm, after the imprisonment of the

royal family at the Temple, when his correspondence with the Queen ceased, his thoughts were almost as much with Louis XVI as with Marie Antoinette; everywhere he speaks of 'they' and 'them,' of that 'dear and unfortunate family,' of 'that unhappy Queen and those poor children.' During the trial of Louis XVI, when he seems to expect Marie Antoinette will be condemned at the same time, he writes: 'If they perish all is lost for me,' and again: 'The vision of them will never be effaced from my memory, I shall weep for them all my life, I shall think of them and of their kindness to me, of their confidence in me, why, O my God, have I ever known them, and why did I not die before them and for them?' <sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Sullivan is now his only consolation, but for her he would have died of grief, yet he realizes how different is his sentiment for her to that which he felt for the Queen; his mistress cannot take the place of his divinity in his heart.

In a letter to Taube on January 26, 1793, after the murder of the King, in which he says he has heard the whole royal family has been massacred, he writes frantically: 'Ah, I am too unhappy, my friend, pity me, I am losing everything and never, no never, shall I be comforted, their memory will be always dear to me and present to my mind and I shall weep for them with our dear master (Gustavus III) all my life; I detest and abhor that nation of cannibals, they are all cowards and poltroons without souls, without hearts, without feeling, the opprobrium of the human race.' <sup>2</sup>

The same day he writes to Sophie in a condition that appears to be bordering on hysteria, raving about his adoration for the Queen.<sup>3</sup> This letter, reproduced in photostat by M. de Heidenstam, appeared unintelligible at the time of its publication because its editor omitted to explain why he should have lamented the death of Marie Antoinette in January 1793; Mlle Söderhjelm in publishing the letter to Taube provides the explanation, but as the text

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.



she gives of the letter to Sophie is not absolutely identical with the photostat of M. de Heidenstam's, one is led to wonder whether they discovered two different originals. If so, one cannot have been genuine; can one then be sure of the authenticity of either? For nowhere else in his correspondence does Fersen become so incoherent as in this letter to Sophie.

When on October 30 he hears of the real death of the Queen he takes the news more calmly. 'I had not the strength to feel anything,' he writes in his Journal (as quoted by Mlle Söderhjelm). 'I went out to speak of this misfortune with my friends and Mme de FitzJames and the Baron [de Breteuil] . . . I wept with them, above all with Mme de FitzJames. . . . It was the 16th at half-past 11 that this execrable crime was committed and divine vengeance has not yet overtaken the monsters. I was astonished myself at not being more keenly affected, I seemed to feel nothing, I thought of her ceaselessly . . . of her sufferings, of her children, of her unfortunate son,' etc.—not a hint here, it will be noticed, of any personal interest in the Dauphin—then the next day he writes again: 'I could only think of my loss; it was dreadful to have no positive details. That she should have been alone in her last moments, without consolation, with no one to speak to and to whom she could give her last wishes, that fills one with horror. The monsters of hell! No, without vengeance my heart will never be content.'<sup>1</sup>

From this moment Fersen seems, in his overwrought state of mind, to be weaving a romance around himself, telling himself that the Queen had returned his devotion. For never during her lifetime has he suggested either in his private Journal or in his letters to Sophie that Marie Antoinette loved him and, as far as we know, he had not a line in her writing to prove it, nor, until Mlle Söderhjelm's book appeared, was there any record of her having even sent him a word of farewell.

<sup>1</sup> A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 310.

But here we come to a most curious enigma.

It will be remembered that when the Chevalier de Jarjays left France in April 1793 the Queen entrusted him with letters and souvenirs for her brothers-in-law. She did not, however, give him a line for Fersen as might have been expected. Moreover, her last letters to Jarjays, published by the Baron de Goguelat in 1823 and by the Baron de Klinckowström in 1878, contain no message for Fersen; his name is not even mentioned. But in 1902 M. Paul Gaulot<sup>1</sup> published for the first time another letter to Jarjays in which this passage occurs:

'T (Toulan) will give you the things as arranged for ha. . . .<sup>2</sup> The imprint [of a seal] which I add here is quite another matter. I wish you to give it to the person who, as you know, came from Brussels to see me last winter and to tell him at the same time that the device has never been truer.'

This clearly refers to Fersen and his secret visit to Paris in February 1792.

But in the new extracts from Fersen's Private Journal, published by Mlle Söderhjelm in 1930, we find quite a different version of this letter. Under the entry for January 21, 1794, Fersen says that Jarjays has just sent him 'a fragment of a letter from the Queen' to him (Jarjays), containing a message for Fersen of which he gives the following copy in his Journal:

'When you are in a safe place I wish you would give news of me to my great friend who came to see me last year, I do not know where he is but either M. Gog. [Goguelat] or Mr. Crawford [*sic*] who is I think in London may be able to tell you, I dare not write but here is the imprint of my device. Say when sending it that the person to whom it belongs feels that it has never been truer.'<sup>3</sup>

What are we to make of this? Obviously it is a question

<sup>1</sup> *Un Complot sous la Terreur*, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Ham was the name given to the Comte de Provence at this period.

<sup>3</sup> A. Söderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 323.

of the same letter, for the gist is the same as the one given by M. Gaulot, which must be the authentic version for he reproduces it in photostat in the Queen's handwriting. Fersen in transcribing it thus appears to have altered the text, changing the words referring to him as 'the person who . . . came to see me last winter' into 'my great friend who came to see me last year,' adding the suggestion that she wished to write to him and making the message about the device seem more personal.

But this is not all. In his Journal Fersen goes on to explain that the imprint accompanying the message was made by a seal bearing the design of a flying pigeon with the device 'Tutto a te mi guida,' and he adds: 'Her idea was once to adopt my arms and the flying fish had been taken for a bird.'

Now it is really too much to ask us to believe that the Queen of France ever thought of adopting the arms of this Swedish nobleman, though she may quite well have had his crest adapted for use in correspondence, just as she had used a seal of Quintin Craufurd's. For Craufurd has related that, in the course of a conversation he had with the Queen before he left Paris, she asked him whether he would mind parting with the signet ring he was wearing on which was engraved an eagle holding an olive branch in its mouth. 'I ask you for it,' she said, 'because I might have need to write to you and if it happened that I did not feel I ought to do so with my own hand, the seal will serve you as an indication.'<sup>1</sup>

The Queen might have done the same thing in the case of Fersen and sent him the imprint of the seal made from his crest, but we have only Fersen's word for it that it bore the device 'Tutto a te mi guida.' Why she should have said this had never been truer is inexplicable; everything could certainly not be guiding her to Fersen when she was imprisoned in the Temple and had just refused Jarjayes'

<sup>1</sup> Quintin Craufurd, *Notices sur Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse et sur Marie Antoinette, Reine de France* (1819), p. 47.

plan of escape, saying she could have no happiness apart from her children and therefore that she abandoned the idea without even feeling any regret.

If, however, Fersen was capable of altering her message to him so as to make it appear more tender, when copying it into his Journal, what reliance can be placed on his statement with regard to the device on the seal and still more on his incredible assertion that the Queen ever thought of adopting his arms?

But the newly published extracts from his Journal provide still further enigmas. On March 19, 1795, this surprising incident is recorded:

‘Mme de Korff sends me the ending of a note from Her [Elle] to me, which is here [at this point a small slip of paper is pinned to the page of the Journal] and has given me great pleasure. It seemed to me like a last farewell and I was greatly touched by it. I do not know how this got into her [Mme de Korff’s] hands and I am writing to her to find out.’<sup>1</sup>

On the slip of paper, which has been cut off the end of a letter in such a way as to intersect a line, are the words in the handwriting of Marie Antoinette: ‘Adieu, mon cœur est tout à vous.’

Now, if this message had really been meant for Fersen, why did the Queen not write it on a piece of paper by itself, or, if it formed the ending of a note addressed to him, why was the whole not given him instead of only these few words which have evidently been severed with great care from their context? It is impossible to avoid the hypothesis that they were not intended for Fersen but formed the conclusion of a letter addressed to some woman friend of the Queen’s which had been passed on to Fersen who chose to appropriate them to himself. On the other hand, can they have been appended in modern times by someone anxious to provide evidence of the Queen’s love for Fersen? At any rate, if we are to believe that this fragment is genuine, a

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 335 and photostat, p. 288.

message really addressed to Fersen by Marie Antoinette, what becomes of the theory that the erased passages in the correspondence published by the Baron de Klinckowstrom were words of love? For if Fersen took so much trouble to erase them out of respect for the Queen's good name, why should he have gone out of his way to pin this tender message to his Journal? Its presence here seems rather to point to the conclusion that Fersen, having nothing in the Queen's writing to show that she loved him, either from sentiment liked to feel these words were meant for him or from vanity wished posterity to think so. For with a man as vain as Fersen shows himself in further passages of his Journal almost anything is possible. Thus the entry for January 16, 1795, describes the sensation he created at a Stockholm ball:

'I put on the new uniform, it was thought very fine and I received many compliments. . . . Everyone at the ball came to look at me and as I entered there were eyes only for me. That gave me pleasure and I enjoyed seeing the women who would all have been glad if I had wished to make love to them. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

And again a week later:

'Everyone complimented me on my appearance. I know that all the women thought well of it. Some of them told me so and it only depended on me to have them, but I did not wish to give myself the trouble.'<sup>2</sup>

How are we to explain this extraordinary change in the character of Fersen? The cold reserved man who, in the old days at Versailles, had been regarded as a model of discretion, who, later, amidst the stress of the Revolution, continued to make dry telegraphic entries in his Journal, whose long political letters to the Queen, well written and well reasoned, give evidence of a calm and balanced mind, is now a garrulous narrator of trivialities which almost suggest that he has become prematurely senile.

It would be pleasanter to feel that the Journal has been

<sup>1</sup> A. Soderhjelm, *Fersen et Marie Antoinette*, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

tampered with, and that these passages have been interpolated by someone who has had access to Fersen's papers. Indeed, with regard to all these recent 'discoveries' concerning Marie Antoinette and Fersen, one is led into such a morass of dubious evidence that one is inevitably impelled to question its authenticity. The false interpretation placed on the letters to Sophie, the famous love-letter not in the Queen's writing, the altered version of her message through Jarjays, the mutilated ending to the letter pinned to the page of the Journal—in each case there is something odd and unaccountable, something that immediately challenges suspicion, nowhere is there anything that will stand scrutiny and bears the unmistakable stamp of truth.

Assuming the Journal, however, to be genuine, there is one point of interest to be noted. Nowhere does Fersen speak of a happy past at Versailles when he and Marie Antoinette were together; had he been her lover all along one would expect sentimental recollections, perhaps of blissful hours spent in the *petits appartements* at Versailles or meetings in the gardens of Trianon. But though he reminisces a good deal, it is only to recall the operas he heard in the old days, never does he touch on anything more intimate or hint at a single tender episode. His personal recollections of the Queen seem to go back no further than the 6th of October 1789, to the prestige he enjoyed as her confidant and the King's, always he mourns them both as his friends and benefactors whom it was his glory to serve. But, above all, his thoughts centre around the 20th of June 1791 and his failure to save the royal family. This is the crowning grief of his life. The date of that great fiasco was to prove fatal to him until the end, for it was on the 20th of June 1810, the nineteenth anniversary of the flight to Varennes, that he met his terrible death at the hands of the Stockholm mob.

The prisoners at the Temple were mercifully spared any knowledge of the hideous crime that had been committed

on October 16, 1793. The only news which penetrated to Madame Elisabeth and Madame Royale throughout the whole of that winter was that on November 6 the Duc d'Orléans had met the just reward of his regicidal vote upon the scaffold. Thus they knew nothing of the growing frenzy of the Terror under the reign of Maximilien Robespierre.

At last there came the spring evening of May when, just as they were going to bed, a thunderous knock sounded on the door. An armed band had arrived with orders to take Madame Elisabeth to the Conciergerie. After tenderly embracing her niece and urging her to have faith in God and keep up her courage, the princess went out with her captors, who overwhelmed her with insults.

On arrival at the prison and finding it was the same to which Marie Antoinette had been led seven months earlier, she exclaimed: 'God be praised! He has had pity on me since He has allowed me before dying to embrace once more my sister and my friend!' The jailers had the humanity not to deceive her.

Only on the following day after she had appeared before the bloodthirsty Tribunal and had been condemned to death for participating in the 'crimes' of 'Louis Capet,' did she hear the dreadful truth. The 'batch' or *fournée* of victims—as these wholesale executions were described—consisted this day of twenty-five people, mostly 'aristocrats,' including the benevolent Comte de Brienne, founder of hospitals and protector of the poor, for whose life thirty villages petitioned in vain.<sup>1</sup> Here was also the venerable sister of Malesherbes, Mme de Sénozan, aged seventy-six, the most charitable of women. Malesherbes himself had perished with all his family on April 22. As a number of *grandes dames* collected respectfully around Madame Elisabeth in the courtyard of the Conciergerie whilst waiting to get into the tumbrils, one of them heard her send a last message to her 'sister' through the concierge Richard who had kept the

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet* (1821), ii. 112.

sad truth from her. 'Madame,' said this lady, 'your sister has suffered the same fate that we are about to undergo.'

The saintly princess then entered the tumbril and all the way to the scaffold kept up the courage of her companions; the people of Paris, who had always admired her, refrained from insults. On arrival at the foot of the scaffold all the women victims asked to be allowed to embrace her, to which she consented with her usual gentleness, then bowing deeply, they passed before her up the steps of the guillotine. Madame Elisabeth, who maintained her tranquillity and never even changed colour, was the last to suffer; it had been hoped that the terrible spectacle of her companions' death might break down her courage, but her faith in God sustained her to the end.

Madame Royale remained alone at the Temple until December 18, 1795, when she was deported to Austria and eventually married her first cousin, the Duc d'Angoulême, son of the Comte d'Artois.

And what of Louis XVII? Here we reach a question with which it is impossible to deal adequately in the short space that this concluding chapter must occupy. Some two hundred books have been written on the great mystery of the child in the Temple; whether he escaped or not must still remain an insoluble enigma. The researches of M. Lenotre have gone far to strengthen the theory of survival. That there was 'a mystery of the Temple' cannot be doubted. The complete silence of the child, whom Harmand de la Meuse visited there in December 1794, is not convincingly explained by the old theory that the Dauphin, finding he had compromised his mother in his interrogatory, had vowed never to open his lips again and kept to this resolution. The contention of the survivalists that a dumb boy had been substituted for him seems less wildly improbable. Then again the picture of the child building the house of cards, as described by Harmand, bears no resemblance to the former Dauphin.

Unfortunately the documents that seemed to provide the



strongest evidence of the 'exchange' having taken place, the letters from Mrs. Charlotte Atkyns to Pitt, preserved in the Record Office of London, saying that 'the child in the Temple is not Louis XVII,' have proved fallacious, for M. Gustave Bord discovered subsequent letters from Mrs. Atkyns to the Comte de Provence clearly showing that she did not believe the child to have been rescued after all. Those who are interested in this question should study the vast work of M. Bord contesting the theory of survival, *Autour du Temple*, in conjunction with M. Lenotre's book *Le Roi Louis XVII* in order to weigh the evidence on both sides.

Whether then the unhappy little prince survived or whether he died on June 9, 1795, as was generally supposed, the French monarchy had perished on the scaffold of Louis XVI, or perhaps it would be truer to say, after the flight to Varennes. Had the flight only succeeded, the 'plan de Montmédy' been put into execution and a Constitution based on the enlightened views of Louis XVI—as announced at the Séance Royale of June 23, 1789—been established by him of his own free-will, the monarchy might have emerged from the Revolution with greater éclat than ever. Then the child of so much promise, brought up from his infancy to regard the welfare of the people as his first duty, combining in his person the benevolence of Louis XVI and the majesty of Marie Antoinette, might have reigned in his turn as the greatest monarch France had ever known.

But after Varennes the humiliations to which the royal family were exposed, the invasion of their palace on the 20th of June, their captivity in the Temple, had so undermined the people's respect for the throne that all attempts to re-establish it permanently proved vain. Neither Louis XVIII nor Charles X, who in their different ways had contributed to its downfall, nor Louis Philippe, son of the regicide, could restore the glamour that for 1400 years had surrounded the person of the monarch which even the reign of bad kings had not availed to dispel.

But now the magic spell had been broken, the revolutionaries had not only degraded the monarchy but, although supremely ridiculous themselves, had succeeded in ridiculing all that the people had hitherto held sacred, and, as had been well said: 'Il n'y a que le ridicule qui tue.' A hundred years ago d'Allonville pointed out the folly of trying to transform an ancient monarchy into a young Republic. All that the Revolution did was to kill respect for every form of government in the hearts of the French nation, each régime, each ministry in turn up to the present day was to become the butt of their pleasantries. The present writer once asked a Frenchman of the 'Right' whether he would not like to see a King again in France; he answered 'No,' then, after a moment's pause, he added sadly: 'On le traiterait trop mal.'

Thus the destruction of the monarchy deprived the French people of that most priceless possession—a sense of reverence; it took from them the power of exercising the noblest of all virtues—loyalty. For it is not the King who inspires it but the people who feel it to whom loyalty brings the greatest benefit; by looking upward a man raises himself, and never did the men of old France rise to greater heights than when carrying out the motto adopted by a royalist of 1790:

'Aimer Dieu et mourir pour le Roi.'

## APPENDIX I

### FERSEN'S LETTERS TO SOPHIE IN 1790

Extracts from *Fersen et Marie Antoinette* by Alma Söderhjelm

P. 151. 4 avril. Ma chère amie, j'ai reçu la votre du 5 et je vous en remercie bien ainsi que tout ce que vous me dites sur le compte de mon amie. Croyés, ma chère Sophie, qu'elle merite tous les sentimens que vous pouvés avoir pour elle, c'est la creature la plus parfaite que je connoisse et sa conduite qui l'est aussi, lui a gagné tout le monde et j'entend partout son eloge, jugés combien je jouis.

P. 152. 10 avril. Je commence a etre un peu plus heureux car je vois de tems en tems mon amie librement ches elle et cela nous console un peu de tous les maux qu'elle eprouve pauvre femme, c'est un ange pour la conduite, le courage et la sensibilité, jamais on n'a su aimer comme cela. Elle est infiniment sensible à tout ce que vous m'avés dit pour elle et elle en a bien pleurée et elle me charge de vous dire combien elle en a ete touchée, elle seroit si heureuse de vous voire quelquefois. Elle s' imagine que si notre projet reussissoit, vous pourrés alors venir ici et cette idée la rend bien heureuse, en effet cela seroit peut etre possible alors. . . .

P. 153. Ce 7 mai. . . . elle pense bien a vous, elle a ete touchée jusqu'aux larmes de tout ce que vous me dites pour elle; quand on est malheureux on est plus aisément affecté surtout quand on a une aussi belle ame. Pauvre femme, elle meritoit autre chose, peut etre un jour elle sera dedommagée.

P. 153. Ce 31 mai. . . . Elle est extremement malheureuse, mais tres courageuse, c'est un ange je lui ai dit de votre part tout ce dont vous m'avés chargé et cela lui a fait plaisir, je tache de la consoler le plus que je puis, je le lui dois elle est si parfaite, pour moi.

P. 154. Ce 28 juin. Le Roi et la Reine sont bien malheureux, et ils ne le meritent pas, la noblesse et le clergé sont détruits

enfin on ne rencontre partout que des gens ruinés et qui perdent leur état. Elle est aussi bien malheureuse, pauvre femme son courage est au dessus de tout et la rend encore plus interessante, elle est bien sensible a tout ce que vous dites pour elle, jamais on ne l'a mieux merit  et jamais on n'a  te plus parfaite. Mon seul chagrin est de ne pouvoir la consoler entierement de tous ses malheurs et de ne pas la rendre aussi heureuse quelle merite de l'etre. *C'est de ches elle a la campagne que je vous  cris.* [My italics.] Je ne sais pas encore quand j'irai a mon Rgt: [regiment] . . . Le Roi et la famille Royale sont a St. Cloud, ils y sont bien mieux qu'a Paris et plus librement car ils peuvent se promener tant qu'ils veulent personne n'y va que le service et *je n'y ai pas  t .* [My italics.]

## APPENDIX II

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### THE WORDS OF THE ABBÉ EDGEWORTH

It was noticed that in his account of the King's execution the Abbé Edgeworth made no mention of his famous exhortation: 'Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel!' and this was made the pretext by those who wished to rob the King's martyrdom of its supreme touch of grandeur, to declare that these words were a fiction. But that they, or words closely resembling them, were really spoken admits of no shadow of doubt; too many contemporary witnesses testify to the fact. Not only Madame Royale, Beaulieu, Montjoie, d'Allonville, Bertrand de Molleville and other royalists, also the Englishman Dr. Moore, record them, but several organs of the revolutionary press, notably *Le Magicien Republicain*, and also the *Nouveau Paris* of Mercier, who was one of the bitterest enemies of the King, but nevertheless wrote of him: 'Religion seems to have fortified him in that horrible passage of the throne to the scaffold, and the words of his confessor were sublime: "Allez, fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel!"' Many years afterwards, Sanson, the executioner, related to Louis XVIII that whilst the King was mounting the steps of the scaffold he heard the Abbé Edgeworth saying a few words to the King of which he could only distinguish: 'Montez au ciel!'

The Abbé himself, questioned by both d'Allonville and Bertrand de Molleville, as to whether he had really uttered the words attributed to him, replied that he was so overcome with grief and horror at the time that he could not be sure what he had said, and Bertrand de Molleville therefore concluded that, as they had been circulated all over Paris directly after the death of the King and denied by no one, they had really been spoken and only the Abbé's modesty and preoccupation with the sufferings of Louis XVI prevented him from remembering the part he himself had played in the tragedy.

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